

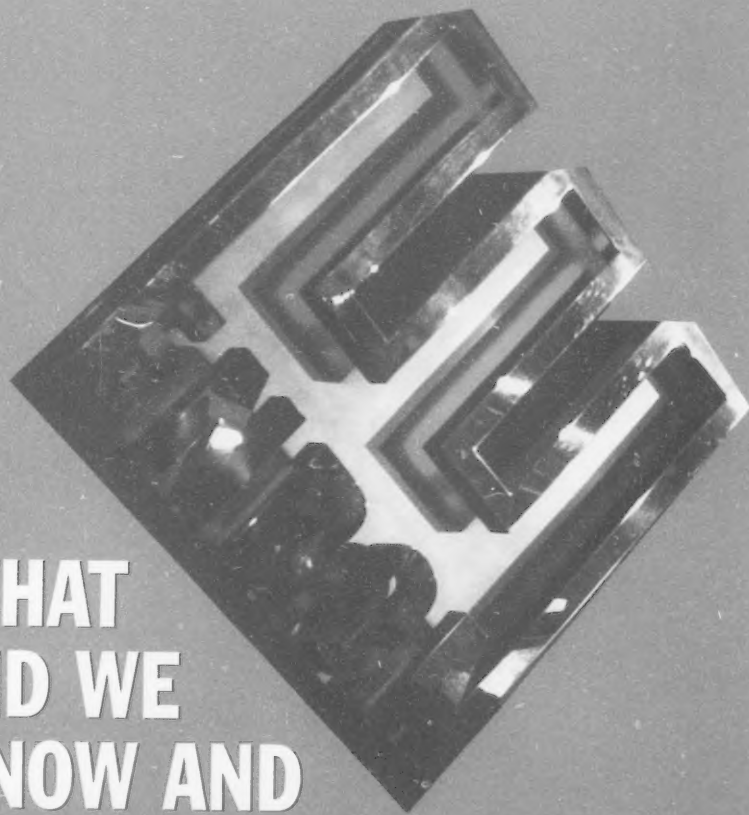
# CJR

COLUMBIA  
JOURNALISM  
REVIEW

MARCH/APRIL 2002 \$4.95/CANADA \$5.95

AT THE JOURNAL:  
WAITING FOR GIGOT

# ENRON



WHAT  
DID WE  
KNOW AND  
WHEN DID  
WE KNOW IT?



AL JAZEERA'S WAR:  
A DIFFERENT PRISM



THE ANCHORS  
LOOK BACK

MIDDLE AMERICA'S  
LATINO PUZZLE



03 >

## TODAY

Mass-produce a hybrid  
system that reduces  
smog-forming emissions  
by up to 90%



## TOMORROW

The other 10%

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"To assess the performance of journalism . . . to help stimulate continuing improvement in the profession, and to speak out for what is right, fair, and decent" —From the founding editorial, 1961

MARCH/APRIL 2002

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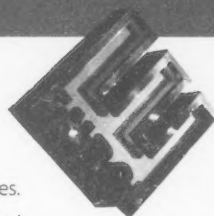


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## DANIEL PEARL, 38, REPORTER

At press time came word that Daniel Pearl, the *Wall Street Journal* correspondent who was kidnapped while chasing a story in Pakistan, had been murdered. His family, in a statement, called him "a musician, a writer, a story-teller, and a bridge-builder." One of his former editors, at *The Berkshire Eagle*, called him something else — a



reporter's reporter. "He always wanted to make more calls," Lewis Cuyler, told *The New York Times*, "because there were so many dimensions of the story he was curious about." Perhaps the best tribute to Pearl is to recognize and encourage that kind of drive in ourselves and other journalists, and set it loose on a complicated world.

WALL STREET JOURNAL/REUTERS



IN THE END, IT WAS THE WASHINGTON POST that broke the news about where the anthrax investigation was heading. "FBI, CIA Suspect U.S. Extremists in Anthrax Cases," The Post declared on its front page on October 28. According to Bob Woodward and Dan Eggen, officials had come to believe that the anthrax attacks were "likely the work of one or more extremists in the United States who are probably not connected to Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda terrorist organization." Officials, they added, were considering a "wide range of domestic possibilities, including associates of right-wing hate groups and U.S. residents sympathetic to the causes of Islamic extremists." One official told them that "nobody believes the anthrax scare we are going through" is the next wave of terrorism.

Michael Massing  
The Nation  
December 17, 2001

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# LETTERS

## CRACKED FOUNDATION

Thank you for Russ Baker's wonderful article about the Freedom Forum (CJR, January/February). Being a former employee of both Forum Network and The Freedom Forum from September '99 until July '01 at the headquarters in Rosslyn I know firsthand that of which the article speaks. I couldn't have written the words better myself. It's about time that someone publicly said something about the management that doomed many programs of the Freedom Forum instead of just attributing it to a poor economy, as many would like to do.

MICHAEL C. BIDDLE, JR.  
Washington, D.C.

Your article is correct that the Freedom Forum made a painful decision to cut back its international programs because of the drop in the stock market, causing an erosion of Freedom Forum's financial base of support.

The Freedom Forum had a choice of trying to renege on a signed contract to move ahead with a much more accessible Newseum, open to many more U.S. and international visitors, or to cut back on its program of making the newsrooms of this nation more diverse and reflective of our population, or cutting back on the international programs.

The difficult decision was made to cut back on the international programs, hoping that in some instances others will replace our support. We are working on that. And it is

done with the hope that in two or three years the stock market will rebound and the Freedom Forum can once again do more to foster free media in the developing nations.

PAUL SIMON  
Freedom Forum  
Board of Trustees  
Director, Public Policy  
Institute, Southern Illinois  
University  
Carbondale,  
Illinois



*Editors' Note: In describing Freedom Forum's substantial investment losses, CJR said the foundation put 90 percent of its total investments into index funds. That was incorrect. Rather, it put 90 percent of its equity investments into such funds. Other investments (27 percent of total investments in 2000; 26 percent in 2001) were in fixed-income securities, according to figures supplied by the foundation. We regret the error.*

## OTHER 'JEWELS'

In her Voices piece about *The New York Times's* "Portraits of Grief" feature on victims of the September 11 attacks (CJR, January/February), Barbara Stewart wrote that a number of competing newspapers offered "brief obituaries of the September 11 victims from their areas." *The Times*, on the other hand, has offered "something different — impressionistic sketches," or, as a *Times* editor called them, "little jewels."

I'm not familiar with the work of all the competing papers she mentions, but in the case of one, *Newsday*, her de-

scription is inaccurate. *Newsday* has also been running mini-feature stories rather than traditional obits, although they tend to be somewhat longer and more detailed than the short pieces in the *Times*. Nor is the *Newsday* feature, called "The Lost," limited to victims from its circulation area in New York City and Long Island. And, yes, I would call these well-written pieces and the evocative photos running with them "jewels" that crystallize the emotions arising from such terrible losses. With assistance from ten other Tribune Company newspapers, *Newsday* is also creating an informative historical record.

Recognizing the breadth and excellence of *Newsday's* "The Lost" does not take away from the praiseworthiness of the work being done at the *Times*. The reporters and editors at both newspapers are performing a great public service.

PAUL MOSES  
Associate professor  
Journalism program  
Brooklyn College  
Center for Global Media  
New York, New York

## COLORING THE FACTS

Whatever readers and your reviewer make of William McGowan's complaints in his book *Coloring the News* about the impact of diversity on American journalism, they should be aware that he twists facts out of context or reports them incompletely in order to advance his argument. To cite only one example, he claims that a column I wrote for *Time* criticizing Dinesh D'Souza's book, *The End of Racism*, reflected a "general journalistic resistance to the broad subject

of problems faced by the black underclass." He does not mention that the concluding paragraph of my story contained this passage: "The U.S. certainly does need a searching debate on racially tinged issues from affirmative action to welfare dependency and crime. It is quite clear, for example, that racism alone cannot account for the sorry plight of the underclass and that traditional civil rights remedies can do nothing to solve it." In short, I was inviting the very debate that McGowan claims that I and other black journalists were resisting. Before he accuses others of causing a decline in journalistic standards he ought to examine his own.

JACK E. WHITE  
Former columnist  
*Time magazine*  
Washington, D.C.

It's been most disheartening to see favorable pieces about *Coloring the News* (CJR, January/February) by reviewers who fail to fact-check the allegations in the book. Obviously, the publisher had no interest in doing so, either.

From just one case, in which he discusses the National Association of Black Journalists:

In a July 16, 1999, *Wall Street Journal* piece, McGowan correctly gives the reason the other journalist organizations of color wanted to continue to meet together in Seattle — as "Unity" — after a statewide anti-affirmative action proposition passed: they "weren't so keen on breaking the organization's commitments."

Now, in the book, their reason has changed: the other groups "worried that such protest might harm the perception of professional impartiality."

The list goes on.

RICHARD PRINCE  
Chair, Media monitoring committee  
National Association of Black Journalists  
Alexandria, Virginia

## THE WHOLE TRUTH

Thanks to Neil Hickey for his story about the censorship imposed by the Bush administration during the war in Afghanistan (CJR, January/February). But the article — and the sidebar on "Larry Flynt's War" — didn't go far enough.

The main thrust of the article seems to be that American reporters are being prevented from doing their jobs, jobs vitally important "so the public may be informed about a war conducted in its name." Flynt is quoted, "the reason the Defense Department doesn't want reporters with our troops is that if they screw up, they want to cover it up. They can't cover it up if the press is there." But there is a much more important reason to have reporters at the front, and that is to report on the nature (even without "screw-ups") of war itself.

But in war people die in horrible ways, on a mass scale, and indiscriminately. Weapons of war are so designed for this to happen. The war in Afghanistan was no different. Hundreds or thousands of civilians, for example, died simply because they were in the war zone. There was massive destruction of the Afghan infrastructure.

It is the responsibility of journalists, especially during wartime (and especially now, when Iran, Iraq, and North Korea are being bandied about as potential targets) to present the uncomfortable reality of war as truthfully and as vividly as possible. Otherwise we, as a people, are in danger, more and more, of using the option

of war as a first, rather than last, resort.

RICK GOLDSMITH  
Documentary filmmaker,  
*Tell the Truth and Run: George Seldes and the American Press*  
Berkeley, California

## MISSED MONITOR

It was gratifying to see CJR's thoughtful overview in the January/February issue of the status of international news in U.S. media before and after September 11. Especially significant was the discussion of the gap between public interest in insightful international coverage and the small amount of space and airtime it receives in most U.S. media. Regrettably, however, a table in the article which listed U.S. media outlets and their overseas bureaus failed to include *The Christian Science Monitor*. With nine international bureaus and scores of stringers, the *Monitor* has a greater overseas presence than all but five U.S. newspapers and all three major TV networks. And the proportion of our staff and news hole devoted to world news is probably second to none in the U.S. The *Monitor* remains committed, as it has been throughout its ninety-four years, to covering major events and overlooked stories from every corner of the globe.

PAUL VAN SLAMBROUCK  
Editor  
*The Christian Science Monitor*  
Boston, Massachusetts

## LAUREL OFF-TRACK?

Your undeserved laurel to Michael Gartner and Gilbert Cranberg in the January/February

Who

fought for a quality education for their children?

Who

went to jail in order to ride the public buses?

Who

changed the law to gain access to the vote?

Who

has created more change in America than any other group in the last 2 decades?

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ruary issue somehow morphed into an equally undeserved dart at *The Des Moines Register*.

You state that the *Register* had showed "little interest" in Prairie Meadows Racetrack and Casino until the Gartner and Cranberg advertorial insert on November 6, 2001. A check of our electronic archive showed more than two dozen substantive stories about Prairie Meadows' precarious finances, racing purses and moves to sell the track in the three months leading up to November 6, not to mention columns, editorials, and letters to the editor. What you said Iowans "learned" from the ad they really had learned months or years before in the *Register*. The ad, you wrote, exposed "serious financial problems" at the casino.

In August, the *Register* reported: "Prairie Meadows Racetrack and Casino will significantly scale back its practice of donating millions to

Iowa charities and community organizations, officials said Monday.

"Casino officials blamed lower gambling revenues and sharply escalating state gambling taxes for the prospective cutback.

"In its most recent financial-outlook report — now nearly a year old — Prairie Meadows projected that its charitable contributions would end completely in 2003."

A June 9, 2001, *Register* story noted: "A vote in favor of the casino license is crucial for Iowa's horse-racing industry, which probably could not survive at Prairie Meadows without slot machine subsidies. The track paid out \$13 million more in purses and expenses last year than it made in pari-mutuel bets on horses, which fell 12.5 percent."

I could go on and on.

The 4,500-word advertorial position paper you praise added nothing new other than

assertion and opinion. As always, the *Register* prefers to do independent and unbiased reporting.

PAUL ANGER

Editor and vice president  
*The Des Moines Register*  
Des Moines, Iowa

*The editors reply: The Laurel to the Gartner-Cranberg investigative ad was well deserved, in CJR's view, if only for its service in connecting all the dots.*

## DUBIOUS POSTURE

Steve McNally, who wrote the "Letter From Jerusalem" in your January/February issue, should be reminded that bending over backwards — and especially holding the position — often causes blackouts or, at best, a skewed perception of reality. In at least a dozen instances, words in quotes refer to Israeli or pro-Israeli positions. I could not find one

word on the Palestinian side within quotes. When the words "terrorist activities" and even "country" are put in quotes, I can see that the bent-over-backwards position is having its effect. Then, of course, there is the required, "There's no real truth here," which someone said, so it must be included. Is moral equivalence now part of freedom of the press?

I belong to CAMERA so I have read the monograph on bias in NPR's coverage of the conflict. Have the editors read it? Has McNally? I thought a reporter should respond to data where available rather than counterattack editorially. Where is McNally's evenhandedness now? Ah yes, at the very end of the piece, we learn that free lance McNally reports for NPR. Quel surpris! I can hardly wait to see McNally's piece on the Karin A. You know, the vessel carrying "contraband arms" for use by "terrorists."

# Awards FOR REPORTING ON THE Environment

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There is a long paragraph asking for forgiveness for being Western and middle-class and being a member of a Western consumer society. McNally, I forgive you. I'm not sure the Palestinians (or Hamas) will, no matter what you write.

HAROLD B. REISMAN  
Weston, Connecticut

## UNDUE CREDIT

In your 40th anniversary issue (November/December), CJR gave scant mention to the media's coverage — or lack of coverage — of the nation's savings and loan crisis. On page 107, a brief trailer mentions "Billions paid out by government in S&L scandal..." Then on page 135, CJR says the S&L story "had been reported but mostly on a bank by bank basis in the financial pages..." the story finally broke open in 1989 with a series in *The Washington Post*."

Actually, by 1989 the S&L mess was already a national story — but in the pages of the trade press and a few other newspapers, notably *The Dallas Morning News* and the *Houston Post*. Since the mid-1980s *National Thrift News* (and its successor *National Mortgage News*) had been reporting on the crisis and connecting the dots. *NTN/NMN* — which broke the 'Keating Five' story and other developments — was honored with the Polk Award in 1988 for its coverage of the crisis, a full year before the *Post* supposedly stumbled upon the story. In 1989 three *NTN/NMN* reporters published 'Inside Job, the Looting of America's Savings and Loans' (McGraw-Hill) which went on to become a *New York Times* best-seller.

In other words, you are right — most of the media missed the S&L crisis — but not all. To suggest that *The*

*Washington Post* put the story on the map is just blatantly wrong. The *Post* missed the story along with most of the other media giants, including *The New York Times*. If only CJR had done its homework... then again, not doing one's homework is why most of the big boys missed the story in the first place.

PAUL MUOLO  
Executive editor  
*National Mortgage News*  
Washington, D.C.

## FOR THE RECORD

I read "Darts & Laurels," by Gloria Cooper, with astonishment and dismay. Cooper pats her fellow journalists on the back for their coverage of the September 11 terrorist attacks: "The nation's news media conducted themselves with the courage, honesty, grace, and dedication a free society deserves. In that tragic emer-

gency, America's journalists knew what they needed to do. And, for the record, they did it," she wrote.

I disagree. The media have a long, long way to go to redeem their traditional claim of being the public's watchdog. They can start by applying increasing scrutiny to the Bush administration for its failure to defend the nation from terrorists on September 11.

L. HALLAK  
San Jose, California

You wrote: "In that tragic emergency, America's journalists knew what they needed to do. And, for the record, they did it."

And, for the record, haven't really done it since. The intervening time has seen a remarkable amount of rumor mongering, jingoism, blind adherence to rumor, and arm-chair patriotism.

JEFF GREEN  
Kent Lakes, New York

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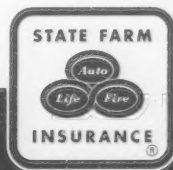
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# NOTEBOOK

## THE LAST WORD ON TALK

BY RUSS BAKER

In Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop*, the protagonist, a provincial expert on root vegetables, is mistaken for a foreign correspondent and dispatched to an obscure African land where he must file dispatches on a tribal war he does not understand to an employer who does not care. In Russ's *Canceled Scoop*, our hero — an investigative reporter — finds himself in France on a big, exciting story at the precise moment when his benefactor, the fabulous Tina Brown, goes out of business. After weeks of trying to persuade French government officials that *Talk Magazine* (1) existed, and (2) merited their time, I suddenly had to learn how to say in French, "Oh, never mind."

It's hard to fault the French for not having heard of *Talk* when it appears that all too few Americans were paying attention. Supposedly, *Talk* attained a fairly impressive readership, but, truth be told, I didn't see people reading it on park benches or doctor's couches. Perhaps too much of Tina's energy went into stoking media buzz at an endless round of industry parties and too little into getting quality issues onto newsstands.

Tina, and therefore her creation *Talk*, bet everything on being fabulous. In one story on *Talk*'s demise, she was quoted as insisting: "I am *still* Tina Brown." I don't doubt she said it. The first time I met her, in the mid-90s, she mistook me

for the caterer at a Freedom Forum event that her husband, Harry Evans, was addressing; she was, however, lavish in her praise of the hors d'oeuvres. The last time I saw her, I was on my way to France to spend a lot of her magazine's money on an important investigative story of the sort she professed

out giving me a second thought.

And yet it's also true that Tina Brown was one of the only editors in the New York magazine world willing to take risks for a story. When she ran *The New Yorker*, you didn't need a pedigree or a bestseller to make a pitch; anyone with a good idea or inside track on a scoop could get a hearing. And she paid well, driving rates up at other books to livable levels. All in all, she was good for writers.

Some observers argue that *Talk* failed because it lacked a clearly defined audience. That's nonsense. Just because a magazine is not geared to anorexic fashionistas or twenty-seven-year-old male beer drinkers is no reason it can't survive. As such examples as *Vanity Fair* (another former Tina fief) — and to some extent, even *Time* magazine — show, a general interest periodical with a mix of glitz and hard-edged reporting should be able to develop a mutually satisfying relationship with a critical mass of readers. After a directionless (dare I say clueless?) start, Tina's mix was steadily improving.

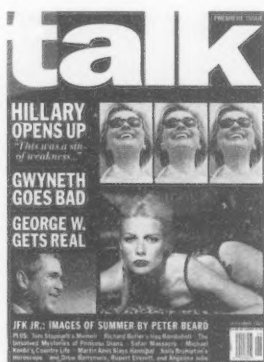
The real problem isn't that Tina did *this* or *that*, but that we're discussing Tina at all. Personality-cult magazines — Oprah's *O* is the rule-proving exception — are not a great idea (although at least when I wrote a piece for John F. Kennedy Jr.'s *George*, I knew why people were interested in it. On assignment in Germany, I got only one question: Had I

met the hunk himself? And was he like his father?).

In articles explaining why *Talk* didn't make it, the dread words "September 11" were prominent. Certainly, the downturn that began in 2000 stifled ad revenue. But Tina is a survivor. As long as there are people in the industry convinced she is a force to reckon with, she will find backers in a resurgent economy. And with the dearth of innovative, risk-taking magazines, any new, well-funded venture by Tina Brown will be sure to attract talented writers, illustrators, photographers, and designers — that is, if Tina and her well-heeled backers at Miramax/Disney and Hearst (each of which put up half the cash back in 1999) don't end up stiffing all those contributors who, like me, were hard at work for *Talk* when the ax fell. (Stiffing the contributors, by the way, is exactly what *Talk*'s business manager says the ex-magazine intends to do. Oh, well. Nobody ever called that gang warm-hearted.)

Perhaps I should heed the advice of David Halberstam. I got to meet him at an industry party a few years ago, and he asked me, probably just to make conversation, "Who are you writing for these days?" When I mentioned *George*, he leaned forward a bit conspiratorially and said, "May I give you some advice? Try to be a little more selective." But a writer's lot, like an editor's, is not an easy one. I could swear I later saw Halberstam's byline in the same magazine. ■

Russ Baker is a contributing editor to CJR.



R.I.P.: 9/99, 2/02

great interest in; I was introduced to her as Russ Smith, which clearly rang no bell; instead of inquiring further, she proceeded to discuss sensitive masthead matters with her entourage of subordinates with-

In Fort Worth, they call it the "refrigerator door prize." That is, the more Star-Telegram readers find reason to pin items from the paper to the refrigerator door, the better its editors feel they are reaching their community.

Certainly it's one measure. We can think of many others. In no special order: (a) involvement by management and employees in community activities, everything from a halfway house to a United Way campaign (b) public service journalism (c) hiring practices that reflect the diversity of the community in the newspaper's staff, and editorial practices that do the same in its pages (d) strong support in a crisis (e) special recognition for employees who make special commitments to their communities (f) Kids Voting, literacy projects and the like.

At Knight Ridder, we regard all of these as important. As critical as it is for the reporting of the news to be impartial, it is equally critical that the newspaper itself be part of the fabric of its community. That it care what happens to a town, city or region in ways that people recognize as real ... by celebrating what's good, by helping to understand what isn't, and by demonstrating – in deed as well as word – that the well-being of the people who make possible the paper's prosperity is its true noble purpose.

Over the years, we have found a variety of ways to show this concern. We ask each of our publishers to take an active role in the community – and to encourage senior management to do

so as well. We ask each of our newspapers to "give back" materially to the communities that support them – and they do. We ask our newsrooms to make public service journalism projects a high priority. And we remind our editors to remind their staffs that saying "yes" to news the community finds important – like chamber of commerce awards and Little League scores – is a good way to make the newspaper important to the community. Thus the "refrigerator door prize."

Most of the time, when community participation is called for, our approach is low-key. A publisher becomes the

especially in leadership roles, at our newspapers is among them. No Knight Ridder editor is less than very sensitive to the importance of minority representation on the pages of our papers. At The Miami Herald, with el Nuevo Herald, at the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, with La Estrella, and at the San Jose Mercury News, with Nuevo Mundo and Viet Mercury, that sensitivity has flowered into whole new publications.

Every October, when we present 15 James K. Batten Knight Ridder Excellence Awards to employees who excel in the disciplines important to

publishing a newspaper, one of them recognizes community service and one diversity.

Every day, when we think about content

# Involvement in Our Communities

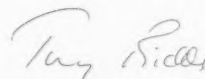
chairperson of the United Way Campaign. An information technology director sits on the board of the local opera company. The "chicken dinner" news gets covered.

Sometimes, however, more is called for. In 1992, after Hurricane Andrew devastated Dade County, corporate executives helped launch Miami's "We Will Rebuild" campaign – and two of them donated half their annual bonuses as seed money. Subsequent crises in other communities have prompted similar – if less dramatic – interventions. Like \$25,000 to plant trees in Grand Forks after the tornadoes last summer.

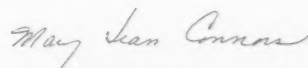
But community involvement is more than gestures. It's how you think about the paper each day.

Every year, when we set our corporate goals, we make sure that an increase in the number of women and minorities,

that matters most, we think about public service. In 2001, public service projects ranged from the (Wilkes-Barre, Pa.) Times Leader's series on favoritism and cronyism in county government to the Detroit Free Press' investigation of dragnet-style police operations. It's one reason that over the past 15 years, we've won five of the Pulitzer Prize Gold Medals for Meritorious Public Service. It's not the refrigerator door, but it's nice.



Tony Ridder  
Chairman and CEO



Mary Jean Connors  
Senior Vice President/Human Resources

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We're local,  
coast to coast,  
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- Detroit Free Press
- The Miami Herald
- San Jose Mercury News
- The Kansas City Star
- The Charlotte Observer
- Fort Worth Star-Telegram
- St. Paul Pioneer Press
- Contra Costa Newspapers
- Philadelphia Daily News
- Akron Beacon Journal

- Lexington (Ky.) Herald-Leader
- The (Columbia, S.C.) State
- el Nuevo Herald (Miami)
- The Wichita (Kan.) Eagle
- The Macon (Ga.) Telegraph
- Belleville (Ill.) News-Democrat
- (Wilkes-Barre, Pa.) Times Leader
- Duluth (Minn.) News-Tribune
- Columbus (Ga.) Ledger-Enquirer
- Tallahassee (Fla.) Democrat
- The (Myrtle Beach, S.C.) Sun News

- The (Biloxi, Miss.) Sun Herald
- The (Fort Wayne, Ind.) News-Sentinel
- Bradenton (Fla.) Herald
- The (San Luis Obispo, Calif.) Tribune
- The Monterey County (Calif.) Herald
- Grand Forks (N.D.) Herald
- (State College, Pa.) Centre Daily Times
- Aberdeen (S.D.) American News
- Warner Robins (Ga.) Daily Sun
- The Olathe (Kan.) News

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# CURRENTS

## IN REVIEW: FRAMING THE FLAG

One month after the first U.S. bombing of Kabul, Fox News correspondent Brit Hume delivered a short but stinging report on his nightly broadcast. "Over at ABC News, where the wearing of American flag lapel pins is banned," said Hume, his own pin firmly in place, "Peter Jennings and his team have devoted far more time to the coverage of civilian casualties in Afghanistan than either of their broadcast network competitors."

Citing a new study, Hume said that ABC spent exactly fifteen minutes, forty-four seconds covering these casualties over the previous several weeks, nearly twice the time spent at NBC and about four times as much as CBS. The implication was clear: war coverage on ABC, free of patriotic accoutrements, was quite possibly drifting from the national interest.

For the Media Research Center, the conservative watchdog that authored the report, Hume's dispatch represented yet another success in its campaign to hew reporters to open support for the war. Already the nation's most vocal critic of the media's perceived liberal bias, the center took on a "new and vital mission" in the months following the attacks on Washington and New York, according to its founder, L. Brent Bozell III. "We are training our guns on any media outlet or any reporter interfering with America's war on terrorism or trying to undermine the authority of President Bush," he wrote in a recent fundraising letter.

In terms of mainstream media exposure, the center has

enjoyed significant success in its new role, often framing the discussions of journalistic objectivity. Between September 11 and December 31, MRC reports and staff members were quoted eighty separate times by major news outlets in the Nexis database. This included eleven interviews and citations on Fox News, CNN, and CNNfn. Bozell even made it onto *Imus in the Morning* in February.

"The fact that we have been received reasonably well during this period is good for us," says Rich Noyes, the center's director of media research. "I think you can tell when we are raising good questions."

Those questions often concerned the patriotic credentials of top broadcast news reporters, producers, and executives. The center praised Rather, Brokaw, and Russert for editorializing their support of the war; it chastised journalists who kept a greater editorial distance. "What we were looking for was home-team sports reporting," Noyes explains.

In practice, the center defined the home team as the Bush administration and its policies. Journalists and pundits who challenged them were tarred with the epithet "political activist," or in the case of the cartoonist Aaron McGruder, "America-hater." In one report, the center took Peter Jennings to task for suggesting on a talk show that Americans respect different views of patriotism. The center's editorial response: "Unlike Jennings, who is still a Canadian citizen, we are Americans."

After CNN submitted six questions to an alleged representative of Osama bin Laden, the *Los Angeles Times* quoted Bozell calling the questions a "slap in the face of the American people." *The Boston Globe* and *The Christian Science Monitor* reported on

the center's criticism of Reuters and the BBC for swearing off the term "terrorist." The center also spread the word about ABC News president David Westin's equivocation over whether the Pentagon had been a "legitimate military target," eliciting a prompt apology from the network chief and a flurry of embarrassing press coverage. "They put stuff out there and either it speaks for itself or it doesn't," said Hume, who worked at ABC News for twenty-three years before joining Fox. "The value of these people is their research."

Some media watchers agree. "Senior network executives tend to dismiss the center a bit too reflexively," said Howard Kurtz, media reporter for CNN and *The Washington Post*. "This is clearly because the organization has such a conservative agenda, but that doesn't mean their barbs aren't hitting the mark sometimes."

In many ways, Bozell's group has continued the mission begun in 1969 by Reed Irvine's Accuracy in Media, which helped found MRC in 1987 by sharing its mailing list. But Bozell, a syndicated columnist who served as finance director in Patrick Buchanan's 1992 presidential campaign, has developed a much larger organization. Funded by such conservative groups

as the Sarah Scaife Foundation, his center boasted an income of \$15 million in 2000, more than eighteen times as much as Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, the largest liberal media watchdog.

From September 11 until Christmas, a staff of eight full-time researchers recorded and reviewed all the broadcasts on CBS, NBC, ABC, CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News, said Noyes. Any possible evidence of "liberal bias" or wavering support of the military mission was flagged for distribution through the group's Web page, e-mail list, and "Notable Quotables," a biweekly newsletter delivered free to many of the nation's newsrooms.

While the center's direct impact on those newsrooms is difficult to measure, television coverage has been far more supportive of the Bush administration's policies than have newspaper reports. In November, for instance, a new study by the Project for Excellence in Journalism found that 54 percent of broadcast segments "entirely" supported official U.S. viewpoints, compared with 23 percent of applicable newspaper coverage.

At CNN, NBC, MSNBC, and ABC, reporters and producers said that while they are aware of the center's criticisms, they keep partisan assaults from influencing their news judgment. Still, says Tom Nagorski, the foreign news editor at ABC, "I suppose in a subtle way it's in the back of your mind." For supporters of the Media Research Center, that may be all they can ask.

— Michael Scherer









## OWNERSHIP: A CHILL IN CANADA

**Q**uick: What is Canada's leading media company? You may not have heard much about CanWest Global Communications, but given the company's recent stunning growth and troubling behavior, you soon may.

Canada has relaxed its reluctance to allow media companies to own both television and newspaper outlets, and that paved the way for CanWest's biggest deal — the purchase in 2000 from Conrad Black's Hollinger Company of the fourteen-newspaper Southam chain. "As a general rule, cross ownership in Canada was not allowed," says Peter Desbarats, the former dean of journalism at the University of Western Ontario. "When CanWest purchased Southam, it created a conglomeration of unprecedented scope."

The company got its start nearly thirty years ago when Israel Asper purchased an independent TV station in North Dakota, then relocated it to Winnipeg. Now it's a global presence, with some 9,000 employees and broadcasting properties in Australia, Northern Ireland, and New Zealand. The company's Canadian portfolio includes more than 120 community papers, sixteen television stations, seven specialty networks, and the news portal, *Canada.com*, as well as fourteen English-language metropolitan dailies, including the *National Post*, based in Toronto and with a daily national circulation of 322,000.

The Southam deal between Black and the Aspers — Israel's two sons, Leonard and David, now run the company — not only highlighted a change in the power structure of Canadian media, but seemed to con-

firm the fears of those who were nervous about how large media companies might use their muscles. The Aspers apparently have no qualms about directing media properties to fall in ideological line.

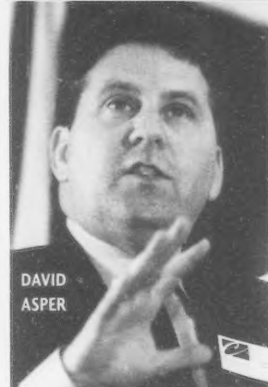
In December 2001, CanWest ordered all its dailies to begin running the same corporately crafted "national editorials," and as of this January the company said it would supply them three times a week. Many Canadian journalists feel that the required editorials — lower taxes and less regulation are among favorite Asper causes — are intrusive. Even more intrusive was a no-rebuttal order after a national editorial last August, following an attack on Israel by Palestinians, arguing that Canada should back Israel no matter how it responds, "without the usual hand-wringing criticism about 'excessive force.'" Papers in the Southam chain were told to carry neither columns nor letters to the editor taking issue with that editorial, according to journalists at two Southam papers, who said the order came via a conference call.

Meanwhile, Canadian journalists say the Aspers have censored local columnists whose viewpoints they disagree with. Stephen Kimber, a longtime columnist for the *Halifax Daily News*, resigned in January "because a number of columns of mine were changed to match the owner's point of view." Kimber says he does not dispute an owner's right to express a political position, but he disagrees with CanWest's reining in differing points of view, especially from columnists. He also believes CanWest's national editorials undermine the value of a local newspaper. "The power of a newspaper," he says, "is a local perspective."



LEONARD ASPER

LEONARD ASPER: OFFICE ARCHIVE/HANK GUNN  
DAVID ASPER: OFFICE ARCHIVE/COLEEN GED



DAVID ASPER

Stephanie Domet, also a *Daily News* columnist, wrote a piece in support of Kimber, then quit when it was rejected. One of the Southam chain's most popular syndicated columnists, Lawrence Martin, was let go recently in what CanWest attributed to cost-cutting, but which many journalists think is tied to Martin's recent critical pieces on Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. The veteran syndicated columnist Peter Worthington had his column terminated in the *Windsor Star* after he was critical of the Aspers.

**S**uch moves angered *Montreal Gazette* employees to the point where, as of late January, seventy-seven of them had signed an open letter in protest. The letter says: "This is an attempt to centralize opinion to serve the corporate interests of CanWest. Far from offering additional content to Canadians, this will practically vacate the power of the editorial boards of Southam newspapers and thereby reduce the diversity of opinions and the breadth of debate."

David Asper, chairman of CanWest's publications committee, in a December speech following the *Gazette* staff protest, spoke of the "bleeding hearts" of the journalistic community. "If those people in Montreal are so committed," he said, "why don't they just quit and have the courage of their convictions?"

All of this is giving second thoughts to some who supported media deregulation. Desbarats, who publicly supported the Southam deal, is rethinking the matter. He finds it "alarming" that the company would throw its weight around so soon after regulators awarded CanWest cross-media ownership, and after opposition forces voiced their fears over such a concentration of media power. "My concerns have intensified since the two sons have shown a tendency to use their influence to get involved with the national political debate," he says.

What's next? CanWest will inevitably expand into the United States, according to Gordon Pitts, a Canadian journalist working on a book about Canadian media groups. Pitts said the Aspers envision CanWest developing into a global print, radio, TV, and Web empire with Winnipeg as its hub. "They realize the only way to play in this league is to truly go international," Pitts says. "They would love to get into the United States and pattern themselves after Tribune or News Corp."

— Aaron J. Moore

For more on CanWest see *Who Owns What* on [www.cjr.org](http://www.cjr.org).

## REPORTING: GREENING OF THE WHITE HOUSE

For viewers and readers who associate White House reporting with old pros like Sam Donaldson and the legendary Helen Thomas, the presence of so many twenty-somethings these days may be a bit jarring. While the White House press corps has yet to be overrun by them, there are an increasing number of correspondents who were not born when the Watergate break-in occurred.

The increase in twenty- and thirty-somethings at the White House is "definitely a trend," says Jeff Zeleny, a twenty-eight-year-old national political correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*. Nobody keeps exact figures, but Rachael Sunbarger, press assistant to the White House press secretary, estimates that up to thirty members of the presidential press corps — a group of about 100 regulars — are under thirty. Joe Lockhart, a press secretary during the Clinton administration, says he was very surprised by how many senior White House reporters were succeeded by younger reporters just during his two years on the job.

Steve Holland, forty-six, president of the White House Correspondents Association (and a White House reporter for Reuters), is not particularly surprised by the trend. "The White House is a young person's beat," he says. "The hours are long, the travel is grueling." Other factors include money — twenty-somethings come cheaper than seasoned forty-year-olds — and a declining appeal (at least until September 11) of the White House beat to many older correspon-

dents. "Many of the elder statesmen are gone because it's not considered the be-all and end-all journalism assignment," says Mark Knoller, a veteran White House correspondent for CBS News. "To a great extent," Holland says, "the White House is a very scripted place, and, in fact, is a bore and a grind to some of the most experienced reporters in town."

But should reporters be learning the ropes at the White House level? Helen Thomas, who was forty when she started covering the White House for UPI in 1961, has some trepidation about the "quantum leap" in the number of less experienced reporters covering the White House. "I believe that a reporter needs some experience and seasoning, some sophistication about how the system works," she says. "The green- ing of the young is fine, but somewhere else."

Asked what advice she'd give to today's young White House reporters, Thomas, now a Washington columnist for Hearst Newspapers, says, "First, to know it is a privilege to be there; to cover history in the making, every day, and to realize you can question a president. Many Americans would die for that privilege." Several young White House reporters interviewed for this article seemed

to need no such reminder, particularly in the wake of September 11, which gave them a crash course in the weight of the beat. David L. Greene, twenty-five, of the Baltimore *Sun*, says that after the terrorist attack, "It became clear that my job for the foreseeable future was to be on Bush every day, every minute. He was now, for all intents and purposes, a wartime leader, and everything he did had elevated importance." At *The Boston Globe's* Washington bureau, Anne Kornblut, who turned twenty-nine in February, feels that "there's a certain vigor here now that was lacking before." Before the terrorist attacks, she thought that "Washington as a whole could sometimes feel irrelevant." But afterward, "We all had truly burning questions to ask." Three weeks after the attacks, Katy Textor, twenty-seven, was transferred from her post with ABC's *Peter Jennings Reports* in New York to join the network's White House bureau as a producer and off-air reporter. "If I miss something," she says, "it matters more now."

Not every twenty-something White House reporter wanted to stick around after the attacks. The UPI's number two White House correspondent, Mark



KATY TEXTOR



ANNE KORNBLOT



MARK KUKIS



DAVID GREENE

Kukis, twenty-eight, quit in early October and flew to Islamabad, where he set up shop as a free lance. Two months later, shortly after the appearance of two of his war-related

articles in *Salon*, Kukis expressed no regrets. "The White House was my first beat, and despite all its extraordinary aspects, I think it's difficult to develop as a journalist just covering a president," he said. "I felt that I needed to do some reporting in the so-called real world."

Greene of the *Sun* finds the job plenty real — but also not as glamorous as some might think.

"Truth be told, the hours are lousy; the briefing room at the White House is chaotic and surprisingly quite a mess; the vending machine coffee is barely tolerable; the trips are tiring," he said in an e-mail interview. "For the beginning of the U.S.-Russian summit, our charter arrived in Waco around 1 A.M., and we deplaned, having enjoyed the movie, *America's Sweethearts*, and an endless supply of beef jerky. The bad hours have been known to break up marriages."

"But for me, and for most of my colleagues, these experiences are simply part of a job we love," Greene writes. "From what I hear from past correspondents, the job was never empirically glamorous. It took someone special to enjoy it — and apparently, someone who likes beef jerky."

— Terry Dalton



## ETHICS: ENRON'S HELPERS

**"H**ere's a story for any aggressive media reporter," Andrew Sullivan wrote on his Web site ([www.andrewsullivan.com](http://www.andrewsullivan.com)) on January 21. "Exactly how many pundits have been on Enron's payroll? How many of them have disclosed that fact in their relevant publications? How much was each paid?"

Few media reporters accepted Sullivan's challenge. *The New York Times* had reported on January 16 that columnist Paul Krugman received \$50,000 as an Enron adviser before joining the paper. For the next three days, though, media critics remained largely silent. So Sullivan, a senior editor at *The New Republic*, began his own investigation, helping to expose a ring of pundits and journalists that served on an Enron advisory board.

Krugman had disclosed his association with Enron in *The New York Times* more than a

year ago, on January 24, 2001. Sullivan, however, thought Krugman and other members of the board should also disclose what America's seventh largest corporation paid them. Opinion leaders responded to this dare with what the media critic Howard Kurtz called "varying degrees of candor."

Irwin Stelzer — a contributor to *The Weekly Standard* and *The Sunday Times* of London who complimented Enron on November 26, 2001, for "leading the fight for competition" — disclosed his association with the corporation and that of *The Weekly Standard* editor William Kristol last November.

Stelzer has written many times about Enron for other publications, but never divulged his association to readers until November 27. Sullivan repeatedly e-mailed and phoned Stelzer, asking how much he was paid for his work, but Stelzer did not respond.

William Kristol did respond to Sullivan, though, e-mailing him on January 22 to say that he received more than \$100,000 from Enron. "I'm a little unhappy to have had an association with people who turned out to be not entirely honorable in other dealings," Kristol later said.

Two more pundits soon acknowledged their associations with Enron. Larry Kudlow, of CNBC and *National Review*, wrote in *National Review Online* on January 22 that he received \$50,000 for a consulting fee and two speeches. The *Wall Street Journal* columnist Peggy Noonan disclosed on January 25 that she worked on a speech with Enron CEO Ken Lay in 1997. Noonan says she billed Enron "\$250 an hour for the 100 to 200 hours" she worked. "C'mon, Peggy," Sullivan responded to this vague disclosure, "You should have a 1099 hanging around somewhere. You didn't shred it, did you?"

Sullivan soon drew some fire himself. Michelangelo Signorile argued in the *New York*

*Press* that the financial contributions of a man named Charles Francis to Sullivan's Web site make Sullivan's criticisms of Enron advisers inconsistent. Francis is a public relations executive who helped organize the Republican Unity Coalition, a group dedicated to strengthening ties between the gay community and the Republican party. Sullivan neglected to mention Francis's contribution when he praised Francis's Unity work in a brief blurb on December 14. Sullivan does list Francis as a "\$1,000 or more" donor elsewhere on his site.

Nonetheless, along with the *New York Press* and Kurtz's column in *The Washington Post*, Sullivan's investigation and sharp commentary helped spark a debate about the Enron advisory board in publications such as *Slate*, *Salon*, and *USA Today*. And, maybe, he helped make journalists think twice about what companies really want when they pay for advice.

— Joshua Lipton

### TECHNOLOGY CORNER

#### TOOLS:

*Here are some Web sites to help journalists cut through the info clutter*

#### JOURNALISMNET: [www.journalismnet.com](http://www.journalismnet.com)

Julian Sher, a Canadian who trains journalists to use the Internet for investigative reporting, runs this resource in English and French. Plenty of facts, source finders, and ideas.

#### JOURNALISTEXPRESS: [www.journalistexpress.com](http://www.journalistexpress.com)

Think of this as a journalist's portal — a desktop of links for people working in the media. Make this your browser's front page and you will be able to easily access news sources, research sites, and even a set of links to pass a slow news day.

#### CYBERJOURNALIST SUPERSEARCH:

[www.cyberjournalist.net/supersearch/](http://www.cyberjournalist.net/supersearch/)

This is the latest addition to CyberJournalist.net, a site run as a labor of love by MSNBC's technology editor, Jonathan Dube. It brings together on one page most of the search boxes that journalists (and others) find useful. The distinct searches you can conduct include U.S. government statistics and Hoover's business database.

— Sreenath Sreenivasan

Sreenath Sreenivasan ([sree@sree.net](mailto:sree@sree.net)), who teaches new media at Columbia, offers his tips for journalists at [www.sree.net](http://www.sree.net).

### LANGUAGE CORNER

#### THE WHENCE OFFENSE

It started as a modest little essay. Then came Holy Writ and the Bard. "Whence," a word used in our time for comic or poetic effect, means "from where." That makes "from whence" an irritating tautology:

"But politicians who forget from whence they came"

"... from whence has this buxom cherub descended?"

"... from whence came fish and chips?"

But then, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."

That's how the lovely, much-quoted 121st Psalm begins in the King James and other English-language Bibles, and how millions remember it to this day. And Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage notes that the use of "from" with "whence" is ancient and that the users included Shakespeare.

But immortals have special rights (and Shakespeare, the old shark, also gave us "most unkindest cut" in the service of iambic euphony). About "from whence," the generally wise and wonderful Merriam-Webster's concludes, "We see no great fault in using it where it sounds right, and great writers have used it where it sounds right all along." *Hmph*, or something. Let "from whence" go. It had its run in the seventeenth century. — Evan Jenkins

A lot more about writing is in Language Corner at CJR's Web site, [www.cjr.org](http://www.cjr.org).

# FIRST PERSON

## A REAL EDUCATION

### *When a Reporter Becomes a Teacher, She Learns Something*

BY CHRISTINA ASQUITH

One sunny July morning in 1999, on a whim, I called the Philadelphia School district and made an appointment with a recruiter. I thought of myself as a reporter, but I was looking for a job. Like many cities suffering from a teacher shortage, Philadelphia still needed 1,200 teachers and was taking almost anyone with a college degree. I had written hundreds of stories about education and always harbored an interest in teaching. Still, I'd never considered actually doing it, until then. "We need you more than you need us," the recruiter said. He gave me a folder of paperwork including a background check for the state police, and there wasn't much more involved.

I had mixed feelings. My colleagues at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*—we were finishing a two-year reporting program there—were heading to staff positions at papers like the *Orlando Sentinel* and the *Raleigh News & Observer*. I didn't want to throw away the journalism career I'd worked hard for since my college newspaper days. I'd interned unpaid through college and reported for a year from Chile, primarily for AP/Dow Jones. When I returned, the *Inquirer* hired

me as one of its "two-year correspondents" to cover southern Chester County, Pennsylvania, a beat that included three school districts, twenty-seven townships, and a mushroom industry that employed 10,000 Mexican immigrants. I gravitated to school stories out of interest and a sense that they were important. From my suburban outpost, I made page one occasionally by regionalizing a story on subjects like revolving-door principals or questionable strategies to raise test scores. But I always felt uncertain about my stories about schools, as though I were guessing at what was really happening inside them.

When the two years ended, I interviewed for a staff position on the *Inquirer's* city education desk, but the beat went to an education reporter with a decade of experience. Meanwhile, my affection for newspapers was waning; there had been a lot of deflating news about corporate ownership and declining circulation. At age twenty-five, I was already questioning if newspaper journalism could be the vehicle for change I wanted it to be. I was eager to make a difference.

So, when I saw the article about the teacher shortage I got excited. If I taught for a year I would be able to see the real issues firsthand. I could have an effect on education in

a way I wasn't having with journalism. And I wasn't throwing away my career, I reasoned, because if I wanted to come back to newspapers, I would be an even stronger education reporter. I decided to do it. Six weeks later, I stepped into my story.

My school was Julia de Burgos Bilingual Middle Magnet School, a 100-year-old stone building in The Badlands, the nickname for a heroin-ravaged Puerto Rican neighborhood in North Philadelphia. City test scores ranked it as the worst middle school in the city. At my first teachers' meeting in September, the new principal, Jayne Gibbs, warned us, "We can't fail any special-education students this year because the government is breathing down our neck." As the teachers nodded and murmured, I sheepishly glanced around. I needed to remind myself that I wasn't a reporter sneaking into a meeting. Other teachers were talking openly to me, without that guarded, clipped manner that I was accustomed to. To them, I was Ms. Asquith, a sixth grade bilingual teacher, with a classroom of forty desks, two blackboards, bars over the windows, and a scenic view of the boiler room roof.

My sixth graders ranged in

age from ten to fourteen, and were mostly first- or second-generation Puerto Ricans. Half the class spoke little or no English. The first week, the school was still missing another sixth grade teacher so I got two classes. They shuffled in carrying composition notebooks and wearing puffy jackets, tapered jeans, and Timberland boots. They called me "miss," and were shy, obedient, and eager to please. They wanted stickers for their notebooks and to read the Harry Potter books. A couple of boys wore gangster-style skullcaps and looked tough, but beyond appearances, they were not the drug-dealing street-toughs fitting my stereotype.

My journalistic interests were immediately eclipsed by the reality and enormity of teaching. I had Jose, a thirteen-year old boy from the Dominican Republic, who spoke mostly Spanish and had been left back twice already; Darnell, a mentally troubled boy who jumped out of his seat constantly; and Evelyn, a diligent, articulate eleven-year old who aspired to be a doctor. I didn't know how to teach a lesson, let alone how to teach a class with such a range in abilities.

The school didn't help. When I asked the vice principal for a curriculum, I was promised one that never appeared. By the fourth week, I was finally given a set of grammar textbooks and a set of social studies textbooks, but they were too difficult for my English-as-a-second-language students. I had to invent everything myself. When the *Philadelphia Daily News* ran a story in October reporting that 100 new teachers across the city had quit, com-



**LEARNING CURVE:** Asquith (by the column) had no idea "how to teach a class with such a range in abilities."

plaining of lack of support and supplies, I understood. For the first few months, each day felt like a churning, eight-hour tempest. I invented lame writing assignments — "What would you do with a million dollars?" — and read *Chicken Soup for the Kid's Soul*. Several of the administrators were also new, and just as overburdened by the remaining seven teacher vacancies. Whether or what I taught were secondary concerns to them. So I used my journalism skills, asked a lot of questions of other teachers, and wrote everything down. A significant handful of teachers were so incompetent that it was dangerous. They screamed at the students all day and created a climate of fear, abuse, and violence. But by November, I was finally picking up enough tricks and materials from the good ones to put together a semblance of a daily lesson. I got by with the help of my nicer colleagues, who amazed me with their ingenuity. In my class, instead of the typical reading and writing assignments we read newspaper and magazine articles, and wrote letters to the editor. The *Daily News*

printed a short letter from one of my most easily discouraged students. Seeing his face light up pushed me forward.

At night, after grading and planning, I wrote in a journal all that I was learning in my new world. Details I had never focused on as a journalist fascinated me, such as who kept student attendance and how easy it was to fudge upwards. Schools get higher ratings and award money from the state for high attendance, and as a teacher I saw how attendance could fluctuate depending on what time it's taken, whether suspended students are considered absent, and whether a school counts excused absences in its total.

And from the inside, I could see how some education stories really miss the mark. For example, in late winter the school board announced plans to spend millions of dollars on a new "discipline school," a place for kids with behavior problems. From an outsider's point of view, that might seem like a good idea. Indeed, our school had about thirty or forty stu-

dents who needed to be removed. They roamed the hallways, picking fights, threatening teachers with scissors, and destroying the learning environment. These students were often victims of abuse themselves and needed help. But they remained in our school year after year. The problem was not a lack of discipline schools. The fact was that the city's existing discipline schools were half empty. The reason: the stacks and stacks of paperwork required by the city and state to transfer a dangerous student into one of the city's discipline schools. It could take up to eight months to put a transfer through, so few teachers bothered. When the *Inquirer* wrote a long feature story about the proposed new million-dollar discipline school, the article made only brief mention of the fact that the existing discipline schools were not being used, and no mention at all of the many roadblocks involved in moving a student to a discipline school.

The issues I had worried myself with, as a reporter, suddenly seemed quite esoteric and bureaucratic in compari-

son to what the students and teachers had to deal with. Most of my sources as a reporter had been administrators, union members, and school board members — instead of students, parents, and teachers. And yet, much of what the school board dealt with was unrelated to what really happened on the ground. For example, the school board fussed for months over prohibiting social promotion, finally deciding that a failing student could not be passed on, regardless of age. Yet our principal is allowed to change grades, and about failing students she told us, "If you retain them we will have to deal with them again." When I turned in two failing report cards they came back to me with the grades raised.

Journalists' assumptions, I was finding out, can be off the mark. An example of this arose when I was given a \$1,200 iMac computer for my classroom. As a reporter, I had written a number of stories involving the effort to put technology in the classroom, and just assumed it was a positive goal. I am now less certain. My class's computer collected dust in the back because one, two,



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even five computers are not that helpful with thirty-three kids. I always believed that increased funding would help schools, but now I saw how existing money was sometimes misspent. The sad truth was that many teachers used the computers to busy the tough-to-control special-education students so that they wouldn't destroy the school. A reporter is not likely to get that story from just talking to a school board member. What the school really needed was not fancy technology but someone to design a curriculum, coordinate the grades, and order appropriate books.

One morning I saw a thirteen-year-old girl crying in the hallway. The security guard was screaming at her, so I offered to walk her back to her classroom. Her name was Angela, she was mentally disabled, one of some seventy students placed in "special education classes" out of about 700 students in the school. When we reached her classroom I understood why she preferred the hallways. Students were fighting and overturning desks and the substitute teacher was shouting, "they're animals." The ceiling was peeling, and exposed nails stuck up from a piece of wood on the floor. Angela was attacked. When I turned to get help, I saw that the security guard was already there and had just been overpowered. This was not an emergency; this was a typical day for special-education students. Yet here was a kind of story that reporters tend not to find — the routine and systematic abuse of special-ed students.

Later I learned that Angela's group was one of five special-education classes that would not have a teacher all year. They were bounced from room to room each period. One substitute pushed his desk in front of the door and turned on the TV. Occasionally, a sub-

stitute wouldn't show up, and the students were left alone in the room. In the spring, at a school in the same neighborhood, a girl in special education was raped during the school day. The overwhelming reaction at my school was "thank god it didn't happen here." But it easily could have. With no teacher or program, Angela and the other special-education students just ran loose in the hallways, starting fires that nearly torched the school, pushing and hospitalizing a teacher, molesting younger students, getting arrested, and shredding the learning environment for the rest of the students. We were dependent on the school district to find real special-education teachers, but it never sent us any. Much of the time of our special-education teacher was spent on completing paperwork that glossed over such problems. Indeed, when our special-ed program was reviewed by federal auditors in May, the school passed.

Seeing this abuse daily made me feel personally frustrated with the media, which — while investigating the police and other public departments — tended to treat the schools as a feature beat. In October, the *Daily News* wrote its "special report" about new teachers quitting. In the spring, there were stories about a rape and a shooting that occurred at two different schools, and in between there were many stories about contract negotiations and administrative matters. Not much about actual education, its successes or failures. And when something was written about the schools, it often carried the intonation that the students were at fault. After a vice principal was shot during a scuffle in a West Philadelphia school, the *Daily News* followed up with a cover story: WHY THE SCHOOLS ARE STUCK WITH SO MANY BAD KIDS. It was illustrated with a shadowy image of a student lurk-

ing in the background. The underlying assumption — that the students were to blame — reflected a sentiment popular with many in the school board, teachers union, and the administration — none of whom want to take responsibility for their failings. But what I experienced as a teacher showed me the opposite. The story should have read: WHY THE KIDS ARE STUCK WITH SO MANY BAD SCHOOLS. The ongoing failure of our nation's urban school system is a scandal — it's hurting millions of children, stealing from taxpayers, and creating violence and desperation that has a ripple effect on all corners of society. And it doesn't have to be that way. It's time for the education desk to shed its reputation as a soft beat, for reporters and editors to take a sharper pencil to the schools.

Having once dealt with deadlines, editors, and the pressure for copy, I feel I have some understanding of the complacency that affects the coverage of education. But I can no longer justify it. Too many reporters think that nothing can be done. They allow the protectors of the status quo to use sensitive issues of race and culture and poverty as a shield against their critics. They feed the sense of hopelessness that is encouraged by bad teachers, self-aggrandizing union leaders, and hapless administrators. All those things affected me, too, when I was a reporter. It took a classroom of them to convince me that the kids really do deserve a chance, and that they won't have one until the news organizations act as if they believe it. ■

*Christina Asquith recently completed a book documenting her year inside Philadelphia's toughest middle school. She lives in New York and can be reached at [Clasquith@aol.com](mailto:Clasquith@aol.com). Students names in this article were changed.*



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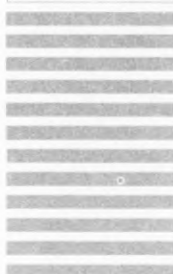
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# Q & A

## JAILED

### Vanessa Leggett: Why She Wouldn't Give Up Her Notes

Vanessa Leggett, thirty-three, recently served a 168-day prison sentence in the Federal Detention Center in Houston for refusing to surrender her notes — including conversations with confidential sources — to a grand jury, making her the longest-jailed journalist in U.S. history. Virtually an unpublished writer, she hoped to produce a true-crime book about a high-profile murder. In court, Leggett claimed a reporter's privilege under the U.S. Constitution. Judge Melinda Harmon of the Southern District of Texas, however, ruled that journalists have no such privilege when required to divulge "either confidential or nonconfidential information in a criminal case." The opinion did not surprise Lucy Dalglish, the executive director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. "The most difficult privilege to assert is the right to withhold information from a grand jury," Dalglish says.

Leggett was released when the grand jury before which she was ordered to testify ended its investigation in early January. But a new grand jury could further investigate the case, again forcing Leggett to choose between her principles and her freedom. Joshua Lipton, a CJR assistant editor, interviewed her.

#### **What did the U.S. Attorney's office demand from you, and why did you refuse to cooperate?**

They wanted any and all copies and originals of interviews I conducted for the book — the entire research archive, even depriving me of copies for myself. That set off alarms in my head because I found it highly unusual that the government would seek all copies and originals — including the interviews I did with law-enforcement people connected with the investigation.

#### **Did they ever explain that to you?**

No, they didn't. When my attorney asked one of the prosecutors during a closed hearing why they had subpoenaed those materials, the answer was that they had heard allegations of vindictiveness on the part of certain agencies. I inferred that they were looking for any statements made by police that would show that this prosecution was vindictive.

#### **You initially cooperated with Houston-based FBI agents. Why was that?**

This agent assured me that they did not want me to reveal sources. I agreed to talk to them because, for one reason, I was looking at them as characters in my book. I imagined that they were going to question me about certain tapes, and they did. Law enforcers already had those tapes, so I really didn't see any harm in testifying about them. It wasn't until the police and the prosecutors started asking me about my confidential sources that I shut down.



#### **What was your defense in court?**

That they had not been specific in their request, that the subpoena was over-broad, that it was a fishing expedition, basically. Also, that they had not established that any of the information sought was relevant to their investigation. And thirdly, that they hadn't met the burden of showing that the information was not obtainable from other sources besides the writer.

#### **You also claimed First Amendment protection.**

Yeah, I asserted my privilege against testifying because what they were seeking from me would have a chilling effect on journalists' activities, and I was acting in the capacity of a journalist.

#### **Do you think you were more vulnerable to this kind of prosecution because you have no ties to a media organization?**

I think that's precisely why I've been treated this way. I think the strongest evidence of that is that this murder story had been covered by numerous people from various media. And I am the only one who has been subpoenaed.

#### **Will your incarceration discourage independent journalists from aggressive reporting?**

It's hard to measure. But I had a call earlier today from a friend of mine who is also a writer. Her new book is about Andrea Yates, who drowned her children here in Houston. She told me that while investigating that case, many sources said, 'Well, I don't know if I should tell you this; look at what happened to Vanessa Leggett. Would you be willing to go to jail for me?'

#### **What was it like in jail for you?**

It was very monotonous. I was treated as if I were a criminal, and a flight risk. If I was walking down the hall and guards approached, I couldn't just stand and face them. I had to face the wall and stand staring at the wall until I was told I could turn around. But when it became apparent to me that the government's actions in my case would have an effect on the press's freedom to operate independently, that really just strengthened my resolve. I realized there was something larger than my sources and my book at stake.

#### **After 168 days in prison, are you still committed to this story?**

Absolutely, more than ever. ■

# ROLE MODEL

## A LARGER-THAN-LIFE REPORTER

*Bob Greene taught Newsday journalists how to investigate corruption with a flourish*

BY ANTHONY MARRO

It was thirty-five years ago this spring that Robert W. Greene began checking reports about insider dealings by politicians in Suffolk County, Long Island. He was thirty-eight at the time, with a thick head of dark, wavy hair, a torso that was starting to stretch the fabric of his size forty-six suits (impressive bulk and a Sidney Greenstreet silhouette would come later), and a face that, while beginning to fill out a bit, still reminded colleagues of a young Tyrone Power.

He had been a reporter at *Newsday* for more than a decade, and also had been a staff investigator for the U.S. Senate Rackets Committee, where Bobby Kennedy had been his boss, and for the New York City Anti-Crime Committee. He already had begun to bring to his newspaper reporting the techniques of a criminal investigator, and he would develop them and refine them dramatically in the years to come.

The story he was chasing concerned local politicians who were said to be secretly investing in properties and then pushing through rezonings that would enhance their value. There also were whispers that the district attorney was reluctant to vigorously

pursue an investigation that would focus on fellow Republicans, and that the paper's Suffolk editor had been blocking attempts by his own reporters to follow these leads.

What Greene and a team of reporters found doesn't need to be recounted here in any great detail. Suffice it to say that the rumors were true. The politicians had been making money. The prosecutors had been pulling their punches. And *Newsday's* Suffolk editor — who had died suddenly of a heart attack just before Greene moved in — had been deeply involved financially.

The impact of the stories was immediate. New criminal investigations were launched. Politicians were indicted. Government officials were forced to resign. And even before the stories were actually in print, the team had begun looking into

reports about similar patterns of corruption in other Long Island governmental agencies. They found them, and one result was a Pulitzer Prize.

As more politicians fell, Greene widened his scope. Richard Nixon's financial dealings in Florida (yes, Greene's taxes were audited) . . . the international heroin trade (another Pulitzer winner) . . . mob efforts to control a local racetrack . . . judicial misconduct . . . bid-rigging on road contracts . . . corruption in the Small Business Administration.

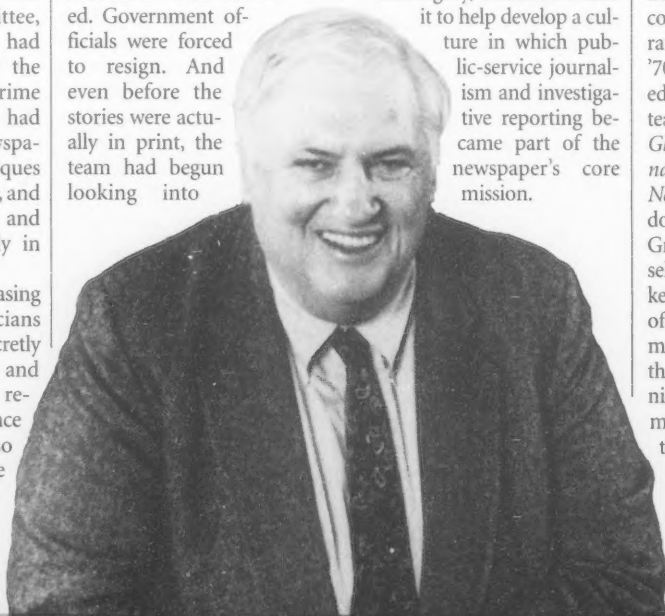
Greene had many jobs at the paper. But it was the investigative team that he created that remains his most important legacy, because he used

it to help develop a culture in which public-service journalism and investigative reporting became part of the newspaper's core mission.

"The reason readers loved what Greene was doing wasn't just that he told them that the politicians were crooks," said Geraldine Shanahan, a team member in the early years who now is an editor at *The New York Times*. "They already knew they were crooks. But he told them how they did it. They could read the stories and say 'Oh, *that's* how they did it!'"

There had been investigative reporters before, of course, and some short-lived investigative teams as well, including the high-powered group assembled by *Life* magazine. But much that passed for investigative reporting was leaks from police agencies and prosecutors. While Greene and his team got their share of such leaks, the thing that set them apart from most others was the emphasis on original work. They built their own databases. They developed their own chronologies. They drew their own charts to trace the flow of property and money, and to connect the political and business ties of investors. This is common today, but it was so rare in the late '60s and early '70s that other papers interested in setting up investigative teams, including *The Boston Globe* and *The Providence Journal*, made pilgrimages to *Newsday* to see how it was done. And at *Newsday* itself, Greene took reporters — myself included — who had been keeping notes on the backside of envelopes and the insides of match book covers and taught them how to gather and organize large amounts of information in ways that enabled them to untangle complicated business deals and tear agencies apart.

"He had this peripheral





vision that could almost see around corners," says Joe Demma, who worked with the team and later became the team leader. "He could put seemingly unconnected, unrelated facts, separated by time and geography, together to make these connections that no one else did." Greene was a big man during most of his years on the job, the result of an appetite that rivaled Diamond Jim Brady's and the willingness of his bosses to let him run up whatever expense account bills he cared to. The result was close to four decades of lobster dinners and two-inch-thick steaks, double Tanqueray martinis, and endless bottles of Pouilly-Fuisse and Chateaufort-du-Pape. He once stopped a reporter new to the team from ordering a Salisbury steak in a restaurant, saying: "When you eat with the team, you don't eat chopped meat."

His size, his bravado, his high-impact journalism, his flaunting of expense-account living, all combined to create a persona that seemed to be drawn in equal parts from *The Front Page*, *The Sting*, and *All The President's Men*. The stories were legendary and many — Greene pounding on a wall so hard during an argument with editors that he sent pictures crashing off the wall of the publisher's office next door . . . Greene protesting a ban against reporters flying first class by measuring the size of a coach seat and the size of his behind, and then announcing to his bosses that he would continue to fly in the front of the plane . . . Greene refusing to take a late-night question from the news desk until assured he would be paid one hour's overtime, and then saying, "I know nothing about it," and hanging up the phone . . . Greene falling asleep at his desk with a cigarette in his hand and setting his own

pants on fire . . . Greene running his car into a light pole off the parkway and — when the utility company insisted on payment — measuring the distance from the pole to the highway and determining that the utility had illegally placed the pole too close to the road . . . Greene covering Chapquiddick and relishing rumors about himself. "Is it true you solved the Boston Strangler case?" a waitress in Edgartown asked. "It was pure slogging," he began his response.

The team was kept separate from the rest of the newsroom, not allowed to talk about its projects with colleagues, particularly not with other editors. Because of the autonomy it was given, the great blocks of time it was allotted for work on its projects, the large amount of money it was permitted to spend, and the huge amounts of newsprint it was allowed to consume, it sometimes was resented in the newsroom. But the Greene team was an important training ground: several of today's top editors and reporters had stints on the investigative team.

While most of his career was spent at *Newsday*, Greene is most proud of a project he did not for *Newsday* but for reporters everywhere. After the *Arizona Republic* reporter Don Bolles was murdered in 1976, Greene assembled a collection of reporters from all over the country that descended on Arizona with the goal of completing Bolles's work. The "Arizona Project," as it was called, resulted in a twenty-three-part series on crime and corruption in the state that ran in many newspapers, including *Newsday*. "It was the proudest moment in my career," he said.

Working for Greene wasn't always easy, and over the years there were some who were happy to have had the experience and also happy to be able

to then move on to other things. He could be both imposing and unyielding, with subordinates as well as with the subjects of his reporting. He permitted dissent and devil's advocacy only up to a point. While he could be considerate, generous, and loyal to a fault, he also had considerable weight, and he threw it around. He could sometimes become so obsessed with a subject — particularly if he smelled a tie to organized crime — that he would be dictatorial and unbending in his pursuit of it. The great saving grace was that he was a first-rate reporter and editor, and a magnificent teacher, who showed up every day with great renewed energy and a pure love for the craft.

Howard Schneider, who worked as Greene's deputy when he ran the Long Island desk, says that the journalism more than compensated for the excesses and blind spots. "Bob Greene made local news glamorous. He could generate the same passion for a story about a hero German Shepherd unjustly sentenced to death as to a multimillion-dollar public works scandal," he says. "On any given day, Bob convinced reporters that with enough hustle, persistent sourcing, or enterprise reporting they could find a story in a small corner of suburban America that could lead the paper, make the wires, or even lead to a Pulitzer Prize."

This was impressed on me yet again in his last year at *Newsday*. I was driving home from work late one night, and from an overpass that crossed Northern State Parkway I saw a long line of stalled tail lights glowing red in the dark, and many flashing lights of police cars and ambulances far off in the distance. I called the office from my cell phone and told the desk there seemed to be a bad accident on the parkway. Yes, the editor said, they knew

all about it, and while other reporters and photographers were on the way, the situation already was well in hand. Bob Greene had been driving home when he hit the backup. He had detoured onto a service road, and gotten fairly close to the scene. And then — at age sixty-three, with a stomach the size of a beach ball and the lungs of a forty-year smoker — he had dog-trotted down the road, climbed over a chain-link fence, flashed his press pass at the troopers, and begun taking names, getting quotes, and dictating details back to the office.

**G**reen retired from *Newsday* in 1992, and in recent years he has devoted himself to building up a journalism program at Hofstra University, where he's a popular figure on the campus, teaching classes, supervising faculty, and regaling students with an endless stream of stories about the reporting life. He was voted "Teacher of The Year" in 2000 by the entire graduating class of the university, and was awarded the school's Presidential Medal last year for having built up the program from approximately one hundred students to more than four hundred. He insists that the program be built around practical experience, not lecture hall theory, and requires all the full-time teachers to have spent at least ten years in a newsroom.

He'll leave there soon, heading into at least semi-retirement after a career as a reporter, editor, author, lecturer, television anchor, teacher, and government investigator, and an early supporter of IRE. But he's said in the past that he only wants one word of description on his tombstone: "Reporter."

That he was — and the best one I ever worked with. ■

*Anthony Marro is executive vice president and editor of Newsday.*

# DARTS & . . .

## BUILDING UP BUSH

The press moves in mysterious ways its White House service to perform. To wit:



— The *Washington Post* gave inside burial to a major address by Senate majority leader Tom Daschle attacking Bush's economic policies— but gave page-one, above-the-fold play to Bush's response (and reinforced, in the *Post*'s own headline, Bush's false implication that Daschle had proposed an increase in taxes).

— The back-to-back presentation by NBC of Tom Brokaw's hourlong special *The Bush White House: Inside the Real West Wing*, and an episode of the popular dramatic series, *The West Wing*, blurred not merely the already shaky lines between news and entertainment; it also, and more subtly, blurred the lines between news and entertainment and politics. In making its dubious programming decision, the network could not have been unaware of the potential for added value — that through (aggressively promoted) linkage in viewers' minds, the idealized inhabitants of the fictional West Wing would enhance the image of the real ones.

— The Associated Press, in a dispatch about a White House meeting between Bush and Republican and Democratic congressional leaders, accorded powers to Bush that were downright kingly: he had "summoned" the leaders, ran the AP report, and given them "marching orders." As every middle-school student knows, the separation of powers, a constitutional principle that has served democracy well for lo these two hundred years, allows the executive branch to exercise no such authority over the legislative branch.

## THE OTHER

— Competition keeps a paper on its toes — but it can also lead to clumsy missteps. Consider how the two dailies in Trenton, New Jersey, covered the story when an escaped convict, two-time murderer Terrence Brewer, turned himself in to authorities after a week on the run. Fearful of the police and remembering the fairness with which *The Times of Trenton* had reported on his trial, Brewer chose as the place for his surrender the *Times's*

very own building. While that detail was hardly lost in the *Times's* September 6 front-page story, sidebars, and photos, *The Trentonian* managed, with some awkward journalistic footwork, to avoid it altogether in that day's coverage, along with any mention of its rival's name. The escaped convict had "turned himself in to reporters and police about 8 P.M. yesterday," ran the vague *Trentonian* lead, "... a mere two blocks from headquarters ..."

## THE HUSTLERS

— At the height of the anthrax crisis, *Foster's Daily Democrat*, in Dover, New Hampshire, presented on the front page of its October 30 Health/Science section a by-lined article (with photo) by one Dr. Scott Alderson that purported to provide medical information about the disease. The good doctor's expert opinion: since no one really knows much about the prevention and cure of anthrax, stay healthy through regular visits to your local chiropractor. Readers with questions were referred to an unidentified phone number, which turned out to be an answering machine for Alderson's chiropractic business. Filling an entire column, the piece was, quite literally, filler, freely offered by chiropractor Alderson to a paper with low resistance, one acutely in need of some serious editorial readjustment.


— When *Time* made what looked and sounded and smelled like a deal with Apple's Steve Jobs — the magazine got the exclusive story on the company's new iMac; the iMac and Jobs got the cover — did the editors think no one would notice, or did they just not care if they did? And whatever the explanation, will they ever tell their readers (as opposed to other potential partners) just how many iMacs were actually bought by browsers responding to the adjacent imperative, "Buy iMac Now," which (until critics weighed in) appeared in a purchasing link on the magazine's Web site?

— As of September 1, Gregg Wendorf, the editor and publisher of the *Advance News-Journal*, a weekly based in Pharr, Texas, has been working as a \$40,000-a-year media consultant to the local school district, writing press releases, organizing coverage, and coordinating special events. To solve any possible conflict-of-interest problems, Wendorf blithely explained to reporter Dulcinea Cuellar of the McAllen, Texas, *Monitor*, all school district stories will be handled by his wife. A more appropriate response came from The Poynter Institute's Keith Woods. "I think, in a sense," Woods told the *Monitor*, "the school district just bought a newspaper."

— When the new, state-of-the-art Green Valley Ranch Station Casino opened in December, it hit the journalistic jackpot — two days of some 400 column-inches of golden news, including thirteen photos and three maps, almost all of them in color, in the *Las Vegas Sun*. The paper made no bones about the fact that its sole owner, the Greenspun family, is also half-owner of what it's hoping will become a favored draw for "the locals." Wanna bet that those 400 column-inches improved the odds?

# ... LAURELS

## CARDINAL SINS



In January, when the former priest John Geoghan was found guilty in the first of a string of sex-abuse cases pending against him, almost a year to the day had passed since the Boston press had reported on a remarkable new development: a judge had ruled that Bernard Cardinal Law, archbishop and cardinal of the Boston archdiocese, could be named a defendant in twenty-five of eighty-four civil cases against Geoghan for knowingly allowing the abuse to go on. In those intervening months, no local journalist dug more deeply into the story, and Law's part in it, than Kristen Lombardi of the weekly *Phoenix*. Published in March, August, and October, her prodigiously reported pieces documented the sorry history of Geoghan's career, as well as the still sorrier protection of that career, and too many others like it, by the church and by Cardinal Law. Lombardi's investigation established that Geoghan had been well known among experts in clergy pedophilia for having flunked out of many psychiatric hospitals during various sick leaves; it further established that, complaints to clergy notwithstanding, the church had kept shuffling him from one parish to another, where unsuspecting families in six different communities welcomed him into their homes and into their children's now traumatized lives. The question, in short, had shifted from Geoghan's acts to what Cardinal Law had known about those acts, and when he'd known it. In a strong editorial urging that that question be pursued in a court of law, *The Boston Herald* lent the daily's weight to the weekly's findings. "The *Phoenix* interviews add to a mounting body of evidence that Geoghan's superiors could not have been ignorant of his conduct," the *Herald* wrote in an all-too-rare act of editorial courtesy, five times mentioning the *Phoenix* by name, "and yet they did nothing to keep him away from the young people he was driven to victimize." Cardinal Law has since announced new policies and apologized for the old ones.


## THE CHILDREN'S HOUR



You of little faith in journalism's future, look upon the works of the high school press and take heart. Look, for example, at Omaha Central High, where the monthly *Register* delivers to some 2,500 students an impressive mix of news, opinion, entertainment, and sports that grizzled pros might envy. In its October 31 issue, fearless reporting, responsible judgment, and a firm commitment to ethical standards both in and out of journalism were on particularly fine display. Beginning below the page-one fold of the forty-page broadsheet was METH: ANATOMY OF AN EPIDEMIC, a detailed examination, enhanced with dramatic photos and graphics, of the making, selling, distribution, and effects, notably on

students, of methamphetamine, "one of the fastest growing and most frightening drugs in the nation." Beginning above the page-one fold was an exposé of how school administrators had violated the district's code of conduct in allowing a student linebacker to play in five football games after he'd been charged with two counts of assault. As a result of the investigation, the student was benched for the rest of the season. But the *Register*'s editors did not stop there; in their lead editorial, they registered their disgust with school officials. "Until the court solves the matter," the editorial admonished, athletes charged with crimes "should stay off the playing field. Otherwise, courtroom bailiffs and probation officers might have to start accompanying athletes to the games. But maybe the school could give these new people uniforms, too."

## CALL WAITING



That the cell phone has moved from handy convenience to essential lifeline is now a truism. But, as a wake-up story in the Portland *Oregonian* made crystal clear, the negative effects of the ubiquitous gadget range well beyond distracting talkative drivers or enraging captive bystanders: it can — in fact, does — jeopardize lives. Six months in the making and published just as a conference of public safety officials was getting under way, the page-one, 3,600-word report by Emily Tsao and Ryan Frank documented hundreds of incidents around the country in which police and fire department radios — that other lifeline — failed to work in emergencies because of interference from cell phone towers. In twenty-eight states, they found, at least one such potentially fatal episode had occurred; in twenty-one of

those states, the Nextel company alone had been the source of the interference. Identifying the extent and the source of the problem, however, was only the beginning: What was the solution and who was going to pay for it? Digging deeper, Tsao and Frank went on to explore the history of the issue and the positions of the major parties involved. One such party is the FCC, which, as regulator of the airwaves, had originally approved the plan, put forward in 1991 by a former FCC lawyer, to develop a national wireless phone business that eventually became Nextel, allowing its radio frequencies to be intertwined with or adjacent to those used by police and fire radios. As the *Oregonian* signed off, Nextel, the police, and the FCC were pointing fingers at each other, halfway measures were on the horizon, and at least one expert was predicting a "cataclysmic" effect on the public safety system if only those limited measures came into effect.

The Darts & Laurels column is written by Gloria Cooper, CJR's deputy executive editor. Nominations may be addressed to her by mail, phone (212-854-1887), or e-mail (gc15@columbia.edu).

# ENRON

## UNCOVERING THE UNCOVERED STORY

*'The press blithely accepted Enron as the epitome of a new, post-deregulation corporate model'*

— Business Week, December 2001

events that eventually destroyed the company and ignited one of the most explosive corporate scandals in U.S. history.

It's a scandal with numerous culprits and accomplices, some of whom were named in a page-one story in *The New York Times* on January 14 by the business writer Gretchen Morgenson. "The bull market euphoria," Morgenson wrote, "convinced analysts, investors, accountants, and even regulators that as long as stock prices stayed high, there was no need to question company practices." One could add an additional culprit to that list: the Fourth Estate.

"Gurus, analysts, and the media must take some blame for what happened," Richard Lambert wrote in the *Financial Times* on December 15. At least one major American publication concurs with that bleak assessment. In a December 17 editorial headlined LET US COUNT THE CULPRITS, *Business Week* lashed out at Wall Street, mutual funds, and the rating

BY SCOTT SHERMAN

**T**he man who first laid Enron bare was not a journalist. In October 2000, a hedge-fund manager named James Chanos began to scrutinize the company's financial statements and was astonished by what he discovered: murky references to "related party" transactions involving Enron's senior officers, and massive insider selling.

Chanos attacked the documents, filling the margins with exclamation points and notations, and marking dubious footnotes with yellow Post-its. In November 2000, he shorted the stock, and the result, when the price plunged, was a windfall for himself and his clients. In February 2001, Chanos tipped off a reporter at *Fortune*, Bethany McLean, who in March, published a story entitled "Is Enron Overpriced?" That story was a link in a chain of



agencies, urging them to rethink why "each, in its own way, celebrated what is now revealed to be an arrogant, duplicitous company managed in a dangerous manner." And then, in a moment of unusual candor, the magazine issued its own mea culpa: "The business press, including *Business Week*, did no better. It celebrated [ex-CEO Jeffrey] Skilling's vision of Enron as a virtual company that could securitize anything and trade it anywhere. The press blithely accepted Enron as the epitome of a new, post-deregulation corporate model when it should have been much more aggressive in probing the company's opaque partnerships, off balance sheet maneuvers, and soaring leverage." As *Business Week's* editor, Stephen Shepard, puts it, Enron "was not the press's finest hour."

How, and why, did it happen?

In recent months, journalists have undertaken a ferocious assault on Enron. Two seasoned reporters from *The Wall Street Journal*, Rebecca Smith and John Emshwiller, led the pack. In a devastating fusillade of articles in mid-October, they forced Enron's clandestine "partnerships" out into the open, as Enron's stock price tumbled. The *Journal* followed up with a massive barrage of detailed, critical reporting, some of which contained bold assertions about energy policy and deregulation. On November 30, Smith, one of the country's leading energy reporters, wrote a page one story, SHOCK WAVES: ENRON'S SWOON LEAVES A GRAND EXPERIMENT IN A STATE OF DISARRAY. "It was one of the great fantasies of American business," Smith's article began. "A deregulated market that would send cheaper and more reliable supplies of electricity coursing into homes and offices across the nation."

This kind of skepticism is a relatively recent development, since energy deregulation was an idea that the business press — including *The Wall Street Journal* — did much to promote. For years, the *Journal's* editorial page argued strenuously for deregulation, and adopted a celebratory tone when that finally began to occur in energy markets in the mid-1990s. Some of that exuberance, in turn, was echoed in the *Journal's* news columns. In a *Journal* "Energy" special report on September 13,



**'Imagine a country-club dinner dance, with a bunch of old fogies and their wives shuffling around halfheartedly to the not-so-stirring sounds of Guy Lombardo and his All-Tuxedo Orchestra. Suddenly young Elvis comes crashing through the skylight, complete with gold-lamé suit, shiny guitar, and gyrating hips . . . In the staid world of regulated utilities and energy companies, Enron Corp. is that gate-crashing Elvis.'**

— *Fortune*, April 2000

1999, Gaston F. Ceron, a reporter for Dow Jones News Service, breathlessly wrote: "Energy companies are trying all sorts of ways to compete in their new unregulated, anything-goes world. Some are acquiring, some are merging, many are charging into new markets with innovative products. New blood has infused much of the in-



JAMES CHANOS

dustry, raising bright, energetic newcomers into the top ranks at some of the most innovative energy companies." In contrast to the "boringly predictable" regulated utilities of old, which were "safe havens for widows and orphans," the newcomers, Ceron insisted, "hold the promise of skyrocketing returns." Ceron's article proceeded to list "the most active and interesting energy companies." Enron topped his list.

Ceron was not the only *Journal* reporter whose copy crackled with enthusiasm about Enron: Rebecca Smith, whose coverage of the California energy crisis garnered her a Pulitzer Prize nomination, also produced upbeat stories about the company. On April 13, 2000, Smith hailed Enron's first-quarter earnings, which had nearly tripled from the previous year to \$338 million, in a story bursting with effusive pronouncements. "The real story isn't the earnings," crowed one analyst from Goldman Sachs quoted by Smith. "It's what lies ahead. This isn't your father's natural-gas company." "We see continued momentum," remarked a PaineWebber analyst quoted in the piece. "They have a massive infrastructure built." CEO Jeffrey Skilling himself joined the chorus: "It's absolutely astounding," Skilling informed Smith. "It feels like we're being swamped with new opportunities." The piece was entirely devoid of skeptical voices.

These days, Smith is contrite. "We were all duped by Enron," she says. "I thought Enron was a stellar company. I thought it was enormously ambitious, and I thought that if it fell to earth that would probably be the reason. But I never thought it was because it had a corrupt financial structure."

In the heady business climate of the late 1990s, other newspapers, too, rushed to embrace Enron. In March 1999, James Flanigan, a *Los Angeles Times* business columnist, rejoiced that the energy market was no longer "a staid business of regulated monopolies" but a "beehive of financially savvy companies" like Enron. Later, when Enron came under attack for its role in the California energy debacle, Flanigan was reluctant to back off. "There is no doubt that Enron is a thought-provoking company," he wrote on January 28, 2001, "at a critical juncture in world business history." Other business columnists echoed that view. On August 19,

BARBARA ADER

2001, in response to Skilling's resignation and a concurrent fall in the stock price, the *Houston Chronicle* business columnist Jim Barlow announced: "It's still a company with innovative people who have shown they can turn ideas into profitable businesses. That's why the current problems will blow over."

To excavate back issues of magazines like *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Worth*, *Business 2.0*, and *Red Herring* is to enter a parallel universe of cheerleading and obsequiousness, a universe where applause obliterated skepticism. In April 2000, *Fortune*, for instance, published a long tribute to Enron. The gaudy, sycophantic lead deserves to be reproduced in full, for it is a cautionary specimen of credulous, *fin de siècle* financial journalism:

Imagine a country-club dinner dance, with a bunch of old fogies and their wives shuffling around halfheartedly to the not-so-stirring sounds of Guy Lombardo and his All-Tuxedo Orchestra. Suddenly young Elvis comes crashing through the skylight, complete with gold-lamé suit, shiny guitar, and gyrating hips. Half the waltzers faint; most of the others get angry or pouty. And a very few decide they like what they hear, tap their feet . . . start grabbing new partners, and suddenly are rocking to a very different tune. In the staid world of regulated utilities and energy companies, Enron Corp. is that gate-crashing Elvis. Once a medium-sized player in the stupefyingly soporific gas-pipeline business, Enron in the past decade has become far and away the most vigorous agent of change in its industry.

Enron was not one of those "boringly predictable" energy utilities for widows and orphans, but a secular religion. *Worth*, like many others caught up in the dot-com fever, was enamored of Enron's massive online trading operation, which, it reported in December 2000, had executed more than 350,000 transactions totaling \$183 billion in little under a year. Con-



JONATHAN WEIL: the *Journal's* national edition never ran his story

cluded *Worth*: "Enron's mix of the old and new economies should appeal to all but the most conservative investors." Enron came apart last October, but many business magazines remained true believers until the very end. Two months earlier, *Forbes* had assured its readers: "Enron has grown into the world's largest electricity marketer since we last wrote about it. Now a new surge in revenues might be in the offing." In its September 2001 issue, *Red Herring* insisted: "Forget about Microsoft. America's most successful, revered, feared — and even hated — company is no

#### Paper Gains

While prices for electricity and natural gas have boosted the earnings for utility companies with large trading desks, as in the case of Houston-based Enron, the *Journal's* accounting of these companies are revealed in our special report on the management of Enron, which directly impact a company's earnings. Here's a look at the impact of these unrealized gains in Enron's second quarter, which ended June 30.



Enron's second quarter 2000 net income of \$58.3 million, or 35 cents a diluted share, was boosted by unrealized gains of \$42.1 million, or 71% of net income. The \$42.1 million gain was primarily due to the increase in the value of Enron's trading portfolio, which was valued at \$42.1 million at the end of the quarter. The \$42.1 million gain was primarily due to the increase in the value of Enron's trading portfolio, which was valued at \$42.1 million at the end of the quarter.

## Energy Traders Cite Gains, But Some Math Is Missing

By Jonathan Weil

While prices for natural gas and electricity have boosted the earnings of utility companies with large trading desks, as in the case of Houston-based Enron, the *Journal's* accounting of these companies are revealed in our special report on the management of Enron, which directly impact a company's earnings. Here's a look at the impact of these unrealized gains in Enron's second quarter, which ended June 30.

## TEXAS JOURNAL

### SOME ENRON DATES AND EVENTS

1/5/94

Enron wins a ruling from the S.E.C., exempting its energy trading from utility regulation

11/12/99

Glass-Steagall Act repealed, clearing the way for investment banks to also make loans to their clients

8/23/00

Enron stock reaches its high point at 90 9/16

9/20/00

Jonathan Weil's *Texas Journal* article appears, questioning Enron and other energy companies' accounting

Late November 2000

Trader James Chanos shorts Enron stock, betting the price will fall

12/15/00

Congress deregulates the trading of energy futures, giving a boost to Enron

reputations." (In February 2001, Enron ranked second in "quality of management" as well.) In January 2000, *Business Week* showcased Kenneth Lay as one of the "25 Top Managers" of 2000. Lay and Skilling stood out in *Worth's* annual surveys of the "50 Best CEOs." In 2001, Skilling—"hypersmart, hyperconfident," gushed *Worth*—garnered the number two position. For a quote, *Worth* went to his colleague, Ken Lay, who remarked: "I'm not sure he has a nonstrategic bone in his body."

The print media coverage of Enron's top executives was pure hagiography. According to *Fortune*, Kenneth Lay was a "revolutionary," while *Worth*, explaining Lay's "personal strengths," quoted an analyst saying he possessed "the best combination of vision and execution of anyone." Jeffrey Skilling, in *Fortune's* sonorous pronouncement, was "the most intellectually brilliant executive in the natural gas business." He was also, *Fortune* suggested, an unpretentious, all-American family man—"a lively, impish character who disdains the huge, serene, high walled office he occupies atop the Enron building, forty stories above downtown Houston. 'Too quiet. Too removed,' he complains. (His kids often play Koosh ball in it and store their racquets in a corner.)"

Another media darling was Rebecca Mark, who led Enron's international initiatives before she was fired in 2000, and who reportedly made \$79.5 million from the sale of Enron stock. During Enron's heyday, reporters approached Mark with a *People* magazine-like sensibility. "With honey-blond hair, big brown eyes and dazzling white teeth that offset a toast tan," *Forbes* gushed in 1998, "Rebecca Mark could be taken for a movie star." Lou Pai, a top Enron executive, one who pocketed \$354 million after unloading five million shares of Enron stock in 1999 and 2000, also got the rock-star

treatment. "Pai is bursting with competitive energy," *Forbes* wrote in July 2000. "Skilling calls him 'my ICBM.'"

Not every news organization bowed to the cowboy traders from Houston. By and large, *Business Week's* coverage of Enron in the 1990s was free of boosterism and free-market zealotry. For one thing, it didn't descend into hero worship. When *Forbes* (and *Fortune*) depicted Rebecca Mark as infallible, *Business Week* declined to worship. "It has been a rough few weeks for Rebecca P. Mark," the magazine reported in September 1995. "On August 3, [Mark] had her biggest deal, in India, abruptly cancelled after a state government review . . . Then, back in the U.S., on a vacation to unwind, she was tossed into a cactus while on a horseback excursion."

Even more skeptical was *The Economist*, which generally refused to mount the Enron bandwagon. In 1998, *The Economist* noted that while "Enron's famously pushy lobbyists are doing their best to force the pace" of electricity deregulation, the company's goal of turning electricity into "a price-driven commodity" is "quite a gamble." "Spend long enough around top Enron people," the magazine wrote in a searching report in June 2000, "and you feel you are in the midst of some sort of evangelical cult. In a sense you are. Mr. Lay, with his 'passion for markets,' is the cult's guru." *The Economist* zeroed in on Lay's hubris:

"Asking him to admit even the slightest mistake is tougher than pulling teeth. This is odd, for the blunderbuss approach to innovation that is intrinsic to such an opportunistic firm as Enron is bound to produce a few failures. Given all his successes, surely failures should be

proudly displayed as red badges of courage?" Concluded *The Economist*: "Is Enron really so flawless?"

Even those magazines that were somewhat skeptical of the company never took the time to investigate Enron's byzantine finances. One journalist who made that effort was Jonathan Weil of *The Wall Street Journal*. Educated at the University of Colorado and Southern Methodist University Law School, Weil got his first job at the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* in Little Rock, where he spent some two years before moving to the *Journal's* Texas staff in 1997 as a contributor to the weekly *Texas Journal*, a four-page stand-alone section that appeared inside Texas editions of the *Journal*. (*Texas Journal* was shut down, along with the other zoned editions, in late 2000.)

In July 2000, Weil, thirty-one, received a call from a source, who told him: "You really ought to take a look at Dynegy and Enron." So he did. After two months of research and digging, during which time he mastered the complex accounting rules for energy derivative contracts, Weil published, in *Texas Journal*, an article headlined ENERGY TRADERS CITE GAINS, BUT SOME MATH IS MISSING. Weil's piece was a tour de force of financial reporting, one that began:

Volatile prices for natural gas and electricity are creating high-voltage earnings growth at some companies with large energy-trading units. But investors counting on these gains could be in for a jolt down the road.

Weil's *Texas Journal* piece, published on September 20, 2000, cast a searchlight on Enron's dubious accounting practice known as "mark-to-market accounting." Noting the huge profits that companies like Enron and Dynegy had racked up from unregulated markets, Weil wrote:

But what many investors may not realize is that much of these companies' re-



**3/5/01**  
*Fortune's*  
"Is Enron  
Over-priced?"  
story runs

**3/9/01**  
Highly touted  
Enron/Block-  
buster deal  
falls through

**5/9/01**  
Street.com colum-  
nist, Peter Eavis,  
mentions the now  
infamous partner-  
ships involving  
Andrew Fastow

**5/25/01**  
*New York Times* publishes  
Lowell Bergman and Jeff Gerth's  
story on Enron pressuring regu-  
lators. Bergman's *Frontline* docu-  
mentary, "Blackout," follows.

**6/18/01**  
*U.S. News* quotes  
James Chanos  
expressing doubts  
about Enron

**8/14/01**  
Jeffrey Skilling  
resigns from  
his position as  
Enron's CEO



cent profits constitute unrealized, noncash gains. Frequently, these profits depend on assumptions and estimates about future market factors, the details of which the companies do not provide, and which time may prove wrong.

Quoting various professors of accounting, who expressed doubts about the quality of earnings, Weil determined:

The heart of the situation is an accounting technique that allows companies to include as current earnings those profits they expect to realize from energy-related contracts and other derivative instruments in future periods, sometimes stretching over more than 20 years.

Weil's piece never appeared in the national edition of *The Wall Street Journal*; it was *The Story That Got Away*. *Journal* editors in New York never ordered a follow-up, and nearly a year would pass before Skilling's resignation inspired other *Journal* reporters to focus on Enron. These days, Weil, who is now the *Journal's* accounting reporter in New York, is rather melancholy: "I do regret not having revisited Enron," he says. "What I should have done, in retrospect, was rewrite that story for the national edition." But Weil's efforts were not in vain: On the same day his story came out in Texas, it appeared on the Dow Jones newswire, where it was seen by James Chanos, who now acknowledges Weil's *Texas Journal* piece as the primary catalyst for his own exhaustive research into Enron's finances. (Enron, for its part, didn't much care for Weil's piece. Several days before it appeared, Enron flew seven executives, accountants, and p.r. people to Weil's office in Dallas. After it was published, he got a laconic e-mail message from Enron's top PR man, who wrote: "As you might imagine, we had some problems with the story,



BETHANY MCLEAN

## 'HOW EXACTLY DOES ENRON MAKE ITS MONEY?'

principally with the lead questioning the quality of our earnings...")

Weil's loss was *Fortune's* gain. Chanos had been a source for the *Fortune* reporter Bethany McLean, and the short-seller, who is well known in financial circles, briefed her about Enron. "I would never have thought of looking at Enron if he hadn't tipped me off," McLean says. "There's no question about that. I'm not a beat reporter, so there's no reason I would

have looked at Enron." After doing her own analysis of Enron's finances (without the benefit of Weil's piece, which she says she never saw) and conferring with skeptical analysts, McLean, in March 2001, produced "Is Enron Overpriced?" — a piece that bristled with questions like "How exactly does Enron make its money?" and general inquiries about the company's financial health. When she attempted to interview Skilling, he said her questions were "unethical" and hung up on her. Enron executives flew to New York to answer her questions. Later, Kenneth Lay himself called *Fortune's* managing editor, Rik Kirkland, and implied he should spike McLean's piece; Kirkland refused. (McLean and her editor, Joseph Nocera, along with the *Fortune* writer Peter Elkind, have since signed a book deal with Penguin-Putnam, reportedly for more than \$1 million.) Ever so slowly, skepticism started to spread. On May 9, 2001, Peter Eavis, of *TheStreet.com*, tipped by another short-seller, mentioned the shady "related entities" and linked one to Andrew Fastow, Enron's former chief financial officer.

On August 14, Skilling resigned, which raised the suspicions of Enron watchers on and off Wall Street. "It did not sound right to me," recalls the *Journal's* Los Angeles bureau chief, Jonathan Friedland, who coordinates the paper's electricity coverage. Friedland, along with Smith and Emshwiller, began to peruse Enron's financial statements, and quickly realized, in Friedland's words, that "things weren't adding up at Enron." Moreover, sources close to Enron began to furnish the *Journal* with documents. On August 28, Smith and Emshwiller reported that CFO Fastow had "quietly ended" his management of certain "limited partnerships." The team knew they were on to a significant story, but September 11 impeded their progress.

### ENRON TIMELINE DATES AND EVENTS

8/28/01

*Wall Street Journal* reports on concerns over Fastow's partnerships

10/17/01

*Wall Street Journal* reports Enron's \$618 million third-quarter loss and links it to the partnerships

10/19/01

*Wall Street Journal* details some partnerships and Fastow's personal profits from them

10/22/01

Enron announces that the S.E.C. will probe the partnerships

12/2/01

Enron files for bankruptcy

1/24/02

At a Senate hearing, Arthur Levitt describes the "extraordinary" political pressure that he felt in his fight for audit reforms



On October 16, Enron announced a \$618 million third-quarter loss. The next day, Smith and Emshwiller tied the losses to the partnerships, and identified them by name: LJM and LJM 2. When Lay let drop in a conference call that Enron had shrunk its shareholder equity by \$1.2 billion, the *Journal* pounced on the slip, and immediately tied the shrinkage to the Fastow partnerships. On October 19, the *Journal* reported that Fastow made millions off those partnerships. After years of skulduggery and deception, Enron's denouement was finally at hand: the company's stock price accelerated its downward trajectory from which it never recovered, and other news organizations, along with the SEC, began to take notice. Today, enthusiastic top *Wall Street Journal* editors repeatedly suggest that their efforts put the company out of business. "I think," says deputy managing editor Daniel Hertzberg, "it's fair to say that, without the stories that Smith and Emshwiller wrote, Enron would have gotten on fine. There is no evidence that it would have collapsed."

Amid the wreckage of Enron, one question looms large: Should the press have tackled Enron earlier? Some journalists contend that it was virtually impossible to do so. "If a company is lying to the SEC," says Jonathan Friedland of the *Journal*, "and to regulators, and it's getting its accountants to sign off on its lies, and it's getting lawyers to offer opinions congruent with those lies, it's impossible to find that stuff out unless you have a whistleblower come forward." It's a compelling argument with a strong element of truth, but it overlooks the fact that reporters and analysts (like Weil and Chanos and McLean) who plunged into Enron's finances became instantly suspicious about what they found. If the U.S. press had followed up on the questions posed by *The Economist* in June 2000 — and by the *Texas Journal* three months later — the contours of the story could have emerged earlier.

Others think the press missed a series of red flags. In a recent article in the *Los Angeles Times*, David Shaw listed a few of them: "There was a major, longtime discrepancy between Enron's profits and its cash flow. Its return on investment also was remarkably low for such a high-risk venture. Its financial statements were incomprehensible." Others point to the suspicious unraveling of Enron's much-touted deal with Blockbuster in March 2001, and the subsequent resignation of Jeffrey Skilling in August. "We all had an

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## VELMA ROGERS GRAHAM RESEARCH CHAIR

The Faculty of Communication & Design at Ryerson University is seeking candidates for the newly created Velma Rogers Graham Research Chair in News Media and Technology. The establishment of this prestigious Chair, one of two Chairs endowed by Ted and Loretta Rogers, reflects their commitment to support interdisciplinary media research and innovative graduate programming in the communications field. The appointment is intended to contribute to the Faculty's objective of expanding the scope of its research in journalism practice and media analysis. To this end, the Chair is expected to bring to the University an outstanding research program that addresses the relationship of journalism and news gathering to new and evolving communication and information technologies and the new economic models emerging from them.

We seek an individual who will build upon an already distinguished record of published research to produce studies that examine the impact of emerging new electronic technologies on our understanding of what news is and how it is gathered and transmitted. A key focus will be strategies for adapting to and managing technological change within the Canadian news media. Other research areas in this context might include ownership of and access to intellectual property; censorship and the control of information; privacy and related legal issues affected by the new technologies; and the transforming influence of technology and media convergence on newspaper operation, international reportage and journalistic investigation. It is expected that in the course of this research the Chair will develop linkages with other research initiatives.

The Chair, appointed for a five-year renewable term, carries with it a permanent full-time position in the School of Journalism and is viewed as an integral component of current and future graduate programs housed within the Edward S. Rogers Sr. Graduate School for Advanced Communications. The Chair will acquire external funding to conduct innovative research, spearhead interdisciplinary research initiatives and supervise Masters and Ph.D. students in addition to teaching a one-term undergraduate and one-term graduate course annually.

Candidates will possess a Ph.D. in a suitable discipline and academic qualifications and research accomplishments commensurate with appointment at the rank of Full Professor. The successful candidate will have a strong international research profile and a demonstrated ability to promote research activity, attract research funding and mentor other researchers. Preferred qualifications include experience in postgraduate teaching and supervision and a background in journalism.

The preferred commencement date for this position, which is subject to budgetary approval, is January 1, 2003. Applications will include a curriculum vitae, copies of a minimum of three peer-reviewed publications that represent the candidate's most significant lifetime research contributions, a letter outlining a proposed research plan, and the names and contact information of five individuals familiar with the candidate's previous research accomplishments. Please correspond to the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Communication & Design, Ryerson University, 350 Victoria Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5B 2K3. Tel: 416-979-5012. Review of applications will begin March 31, 2002, and continue until the position is filled.

*Ryerson University has an employment equity program and encourages applications from all qualified individuals, including Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, members of visible minorities and women. Members of designated groups are encouraged to self-identify. All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply; however, Canadians and permanent residents will be given priority.*

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amazing clue when Skilling resigned in August," says Stephen Shepard of *Business Week*. "We could have said, something is really fishy here. Unless they are really sick, CEO's just don't resign like that with no explanation. We could have said: 'Let's put a team of people on this and see what's really going on.' We and others didn't do that." "I really believe that every story has its time," says Rebecca Smith of the *Journal*. "And what was required for the Enron story to break the way it did was for the company to be brought to its knees in a single quarter on its earnings."

But the press didn't only miss a series of red flags; the problems go deeper. In the wake of Enron's collapse, many business journalists have expressed uneasiness about the uses and abuses of analysts, whose ebullient praise for Enron ("this isn't your father's natural-gas company") reverberated so widely in the business press. Too frequently during the 1990s, says Jonathan Weil, financial journalists "outsourced their critical thinking skills to Wall Street analysts, who are not independent and, by definition, were employed to do nothing but spin positive company news in order to sell stock." Adds Weil: "There was hardly a Wall Street analyst covering the stock whose firm was not getting sprinkled with cash in some form or another by Enron."

Gretchen Morgenson of *The New York Times* concurs. "Business reporters should probably not quote analysts at all," she says. "If they do quote them, they should at least identify the firm and the firm's relationship to the company that they're talking about." Asked why skeptical voices were generally absent from her early *Wall Street Journal* stories about Enron's quarterly earnings, Rebecca Smith pauses and then replies: "I don't know what to say. There was not exactly a groundswell of people at that point feeling anything other than that Enron had another in a long procession of good quarters."

It's not enough, some journalists insist, to fine-tune reporting techniques. For them, the fall of Enron is not merely a story about a company that cooked its books and lied to its employees, but a window into larger, more systemic questions about the role of the press in making sure that important policy shifts are debated and discussed. "There's been almost no debate about deregulation," says *American Prospect* co-editor (and *Business Week*

columnist) Robert Kuttner. "It's just been taken for granted in the business press, and in the editorials, and to some extent in the halls of Congress, that deregulation is just the right and the natural thing to do. It's the 'wave of the future,' and markets 'work,' and all of the ancient, well-documented reasons why there are market failures somehow have allegedly been overtaken by the New Economy. It was nonsense then and it's nonsense now."

Kuttner is not alone now in wondering if deregulation might have gone too far. On January 15, 2002, a page one *Wall Street Journal* headline read: WHY WE HAD GLASS-STEAGALL. Passed in 1933 in response to public concern over Wall Street chicanery, the Glass-Steagall Act created statutory barriers between investment banking and commercial banking. After years of lobbying by Wall Street, the act was abolished by Congress in 1999, an abolition whose implications were mostly ignored by the press. With attention now focused on Enron's bankers — including J.P. Morgan Chase and Citigroup, who were among the major beneficiaries of Glass-Steagall's repeal — some journalists are finally posing hard questions about Glass-Steagall's demise. *The Economist* recently wondered: "Might J.P. Morgan and Citi have let their lending standards slip in order to win investment banking business from Enron?" and pointedly inquired: "Was America wrong to scrap the laws that kept commercial and investment banking apart?"

**I**s Enron ultimately a story about people who broke the rules, or about how the rules got shaped? Those "boringly predictable" — and regulated — energy utilities of old, it might be noted, did not generally create hidden partnerships and clandestine bank accounts in the Cayman Islands. Given the fact that Enron benefitted from at least two forms of deregulation — energy and banking — and fought to keep its commodity trading unregulated as well, the time is clearly right for the press to promote a discussion of the subject. For instance, was energy deregulation a "fantasy," as Rebecca Smith suggested in the *Journal* on November 11? Or is energy deregulation a necessary and sound idea that must continue apace, as the *Journal's* editorial page defiantly argued on December 12?

In the end, what can the press learn from this affair? Certain things are obvi-

ous: Business reporters should ponder their reliance on Wall Street analysts, while expanding their contacts to include consumer advocates, mavericks, and independent-minded employees. The "underlying problem" for business journalists, says *Business Week's* Shepard, is that corporate "accounting has gotten very difficult to understand." In his view, there is a clear lesson for *Business Week*: "We're all going to get a lot more sophisticated about accounting," he says. "You can't take for granted the signed accountant's statement anymore. You really have to look into it a little bit more, and when there's a little bit of trouble, you really have to dig in." (See "Avoiding Future Enrons," next page.)

With Enron in flames, some business journalists think the time is right for a wide-ranging assessment of the business press's overall performance in recent years. "Throughout the 1990s," says Gretchen Morgenson, "a lot of people just bought into the baloney about the bull market. Most journalists bought into that baloney right alongside investors and didn't ask the tough questions. That applies not only to Enron but to a large variety of companies, who really got off Scot free." The cheerleading of the dot-com era, she believes, must give way to widespread skepticism — a quality in short supply. "You can't teach people to be skeptics; they have to sort of have it in their blood," she says. "They have to be willing to take the heat from asking tough questions. Not everybody does; not everybody wants to; not everybody has the constitution for that. So you can't really force that on people, but you have to encourage it. You have to allow it to flourish. You have to make your newsroom a place where that kind of thinking is welcome."

Revelations about Enron's myriad tentacles, which encircled politicians of every stripe and journalists as politically dissimilar as Paul Krugman and William Kristol (see page 13), have led some commentators to evoke the great scandals of the Gilded Age. But this time around, there were no Ida Tarbells — just a handful of skeptical reporters, and one ingenious money manager, who, by employing the time-honored techniques of investigative reporting, enriched himself and his clients, and put his country's press to shame. ■

Scott Sherman is a contributing editor to CJR.



# AVOIDING FUTURE ENRONS

BY ANYA SCHIFFRIN

**E**nron may be the biggest accounting scandal of recent years but it's certainly not the first and it probably won't be the last. Much is still unclear about what went on at Enron, but what is obvious is that reporters need to look carefully at the financial statements issued by the companies they cover to avoid missing the big stories.

It looks like Enron did withhold vast amounts of information, but even so a close study of its accounts could have tipped off analysts and reporters far earlier to the fact that something was wrong. After all, that is how the mess at Enron was eventually discovered. Accounting tricks may differ from company to company, but what is true for all of them is that many of the basic rules of financial-statement analysis still apply.

## READ THE FOOTNOTES

Too often ignored, the footnotes to company financial statements often contain crucial information that is not included in the main body of the statement. In the case of Enron, a careful perusal of the footnotes could have led reporters and analysts to begin questioning the extent of the off-balance-sheet partnerships Enron had set up. The annual report, or SEC filings, are good places to discover which executives are on different boards and the relationships a company has with its clients and suppliers. These could provide clues as to relationships that aren't quite kosher, such as an executive of Company X also serving on the

board of a shell company related to Company X. Reading management's report to shareholders could also provide more clues as to possible conflicts of interest.

## LOTS OF NUMBERS

Journalists reporting earnings on deadline often focus on revenue and profit figures from the income statement. But studying cash flow figures, especially from operations, gives a much clearer view of how much money is actually coming in and out of a business over a given period, and so can be more revealing. For example, while profit figures might look good, a look at cash flow from financing may reveal that the profit really came from selling an investment at a gain. Or a company may actually be counting as profit a reserve it had set aside for rainy days.

## COMPARE COMPETITORS

Comparing companies in the same field can give you a benchmark. Look at Company X's ratio of liabilities to assets to see how highly leveraged it is, and then see how it stacks up against that ratio in Company Y. This will give you a sense of what is normal (and abnormal) in the sector you cover. Contrasting how similar companies do their accounting can also reveal strange accounting practices that need to be examined more deeply. And comparing Enron to competitors might have led reporters to question just why Enron's numbers were so much rosier.

## RATIOS

Looking at net income as a proportion of sales will reveal a compa-

ny's profit margin and indicate how profitable it is relative to other businesses in the same industry. Studying cash flow from operations as well as from financing and investment will give a sense of whether a company is generating enough cash to pay for its growth, or whether it will need to borrow from other sources. Looking at inventory can help you figure out how well the company is selling its basic product and how long it takes for a company to convert some of its assets into cash that can be used to operate the business.

## FIGURE OUT IF A COMPANY IS PAYING ITS BILLS

If you see inventory and receivables rising faster than sales, it could be that the company has difficulties collecting its bills or that its stock of inventory is getting out of date. If a company's payables rise more than the cost of goods sold on the profit and loss statement, it could be a sign of cash-flow problems, or that a company can't pay its bills.

## GET SOME TRAINING

Get an MBA, study accounting. If you can't do that, at least take a class in financial statement analysis. Many business schools offer short courses in reading financial statements.

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*Anya Schiffrin, a former Knight-Bagehot Fellow, is a free-lance journalist in New York. Sara Silver, a Mexico correspondent for the Financial Times, helped with this article.*

# Waiting For Gigot

## *The Journal's New Editorial Page Editor Moves Slowly —But Patterns of Change Begin to Emerge*

BY JAMES KLURFELD

Back in the summer of 1986 when I was transferring from *Newsday's* Washington bureau to run its editorial page, a colleague asked me which newspaper's editorial page I most admired.

I didn't hesitate to answer. "*The Wall Street Journal*," I said, much to his shock.

"I might disagree with most of their positions," I said (and in fact I do). "But it's a superbly written page, and it takes clear, provocative positions. There's no 'on the one hand this, on the other hand that,' with the *Journal*. You know where they are coming from."

I thought back to the conversation recently when *CJR* asked me to write a piece about what the change in editorial page editors at the *Journal* would mean. On September 17, Robert L. Bartley, who had run the page since 1972, was replaced by Paul A. Gigot, the well-known *Journal* Washington columnist, television commentator and editorial board member.

If anything my admiration of the *Journal's* editorial page has grown over the years. Bartley had made the *Journal's* page the most entertaining and influential in American journalism. It is the ideological lodestone of a political movement that has shoved the entire American political center to the right. He is the Ayatollah of the conservative movement and his editorials — the venerable Review & Outlook column (or Rando as it's termed at the *Journal*) — its Holy Grail.

How influential has Bartley been? Well, let's put it this way. His first great crusade was against arms control, espe-

cially the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. You might have noticed that President George W. Bush just said he's scrapping that treaty in order to build an anti-missile system.

Or take the crusade Bartley started in the late 1970s in favor of supply-side economics. It became the mantra of the Reagan administration and reverberates today in the Republicans' almost mystic belief in tax cuts.

And then there was Bartley's almost daily drumbeat of editorials — personal, incessant, even vicious (and some would say wacky) pummeling Bill and Hillary Clinton over what at first appeared to be a hard-to-follow, minor land deal gone bad called Whitewater.

Which brings us to Gigot. Will he bring a kinder and gentler tone to the *Journal* editorials as some have suggested? No one doubts his conservative credentials. No one believes he will make a dramatic break with what Bartley has created. But Bartley was *sui generis* and the question is just what difference will Gigot make over a period of time. In fact, some *Journal* news-side reporters said they were concerned that by doing this article I would be placing too much pressure on Gigot to demonstrate that he is going to keep faith with Bartley.

"Gigot, though very conservative, is a rigorous reporter whose analytic style is much more judicious than Bartley's, which is to shoot first and ask questions later, or possibly not ask them at all," wrote Timothy Noah, a former *Journal* staffer who now writes for *Slate*. Noah's evidence: Gigot didn't favor the ascendancy of super conservative brat Tom DeLay to become the next House majority leader.

Gigot's former partner on Jim

Lehrer's *NewsHour*, Mark Shields, put it this way: "Paul's an unflinching card-carrying conservative and, in the years I've known him, that guard never came down. But there was no malice there." Which, of course, suggests that Bartley did show malice.

The conservative columnist Robert Novak says that Gigot might not be the bare-knuckle brawler that Bartley proved to be when going after the Clintons, but he expected that Gigot would put out a page as lively and vital as Bartley's.

"Gigot's great quality as a columnist was as a reporter. You learned things in his column. He worked his sources. You'll see an even greater quotient of reporting now in the editorial pages," said Novak.

To this, and all other speculation as to how he will "change" the *Journal's* editorial page, Gigot just gently laughs. "I'm not here to change the editorial pages of *The Wall Street Journal*," Gigot said at the makeshift midtown Manhattan office in which his staff is now working, having had to abandon their World Financial Center offices adjacent to ground zero after September 11.

"Look, Bob Bartley and I do share the same values. I've been writing editorials for the page for some time and my views are quite comfortable with the page."

Peter R. Kann, the publisher of *The Wall Street Journal* and chairman and CEO of Dow Jones & Company, agrees. "There is a contention going around that Paul Gigot is going to be Bush 1 to Reagan. Not so. There's nothing to that. Sure, they are different individuals who have different styles. But I don't believe you will see a change in the substance of the editorial page."

Gigot speaks softly, his manner easy-going and his laugh quick and full-throated. He's forty-six, taller than he appears on television (he's 6'1") and is looking for a regular basketball game in New York City) and very much the friendly midwesterner from Wisconsin.



PAUL A. GIGOT



In fact, Gigot's approach to abortion is not unlike those of Catholic politicians such as former New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan and that liberal icon Mario Cuomo. He does not believe he should impose his personal view on the ed-

Front Left  
in. Dimensions

in the industry and the cruise company. In response, the U.S. Coast Guard said it has agreed to review the *Marlin* on Jan. 1, 1999 passenger ships from western European origins shipboard and at port. The review will be limited to the *Marlin*, *Jetstar* Ltd.'s *Seaviewer*, *Princess*, *Monarch* and *Star*. But *Marlin* assisted much of its risk. American Cruise Lines, which has 10 cruise ships, quarantined from the United States Main Coast Administration under seafaring about the Title XI program. Perhaps it is the only cruise line to have been "at risk," because that's where American Cruise went to register its sailing ships. American Classic, of Copenhagen, learned its failure on the poor September 11 trainee elsewhere. But you don't know the *Marlin* is not the only one on the line. The American Cruise industry is now one in the century of its own thanks to the 1996 Passenger Vessel Act, which requires U.S.-flagged ships to accept ship transiting between U.S. ports to be U.S. flagged, 70% built and 75% crewed by U.S. citizens. U.S. shipyards, builders and crewing firms practices don't build passenger ships at internationally competitive prices, where the U.S. flag is a liability. The 1996 Act is a Pandora's box could have been built abroad for at least half the cost now. And passenger cruise is

"A slap in the face to women every where," says President Kim Gandy of the National Organization for Women. "Inflammatory, unnecessary and simply un-American," charges Gloria Stein of Planned Parenthood. A "swath campaign to have government make abortions illegal," cries Kate Metherell of the National Abortion Rights Action League.

[illegible]

### Helping Danny

Our adopted Danny (left) insists we'll be held against our will, now pinned 11 days since he was kidnapped in Karachi, Pakistan. We believe he is safe and both we and his family are presently grateful for the many public acts of recent days for his release. They have come from U.S. newspapers

### Asides

### Helping Dummies

Last reporter Dennis Ward writes, we're to be told again that with more money on 12 days when he was kidnapped a kidnapper, Polanco. We believe he is safe and back home and his family are so awfully grateful for the many publications in recent days for his release. They have come from the newspaper.

What many consider chiefly worthy of the reviewer's of their blanket operations complained of the "floody" administration and lack of trust.

So serious these cases they thought foreign cases declined. By foreign flags, empty foreign cases and made a stopover in a foreign port. Their wanderer who ran a train from Seattle to Alaska in an American-owned foreign, or without stopping in Canada along the way.

The Passenger Union Act is your answer. Under the decade amidst this state of American jobs and other nations in 1900s prevent their entry into. And what have passenger and wanderer later but a shipbuilding? Well, these two provisions ships would have been the first passenger liner built in the U.S. since 1910.

[illegible]

Bartley does note that Gigot has made internal changes on the page. Henninger, who was in daily charge of the Review & Outlook column under Bartley and who many thought would be the next editor, retains the title of deputy but is now writ-

Bartley doesn't flinch from charges that his page was often over the top. He glories in it. He acknowledges that once or twice he received notes from the publisher indicating the page might have

Gigot and Bartley also see nothing wrong with setting the agenda for the Republican party. Bartley did it through the sheer force of his intellect, supply-side economics being the best example. (Even if many mainstream economists believe that supply-side is, well, voodoo economics.)

"I resent it enormously when it's projected on us that we are part of the Republican orthodoxy, that we follow a party line," he said. "Someone said the White House issued the attack orders on Senate Democratic majority leader Tom Daschle and *The Wall Street Journal* fell in line. Well, heck, they listen to us. I wrote that 'President Daschle' edit three weeks before the White House issued the attack order on Daschle. The whole point of the editorial was that: 'He's eating your lunch, get with it. You're dealing with a formidable adversary here and you think you can play patty-cake bipartisan politics with him and he's stealing your clothes.' Finally they came around to saying 'I guess that's right.'"

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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So is there a difference between Bartley's page and Gigot's? My reading is that there is — but it is subtle, a difference in tone. The best example is the manner in which Gigot has handled the Enron scandal.

If the scandal had broken when the Democrats were in power and the friendships that existed between Enron and the Bush White House had been between Enron and the Clinton White House, I'm certain Bartley would have worked himself into a white froth calling for a second impeachment. But Gigot's page, while noting that a lot was rotten, seemed to talk around the subject for weeks before writing a definitive editorial on Friday, January 18.

"Look, Enron is not a Republican scandal," said Gigot, reacting to my charge. "Granted there is more of a Republican cast, a Bush cast, than others."

But just imagine what Bartley would have said if Clinton had tried to deflect attention from his culpability by claiming that the first President Bush had been involved with it as well — as the current Bush did by saying Enron money had been contributed to former Governor Ann Richards of Texas.

"That was Bush's one misstep," says Gigot. "But it was a minor thing."

But why did it take the *Journal* until January 18 to have a definitive editorial on Enron? Gigot himself wrote it, saying that Enron's managers had violated their public trust and deserved to be placed in public stocks. "I guess I felt we haven't had the complete facts about what was happening," said Gigot.

That, itself, is a revealing statement. It's in Gigot's nature, his background and training, to go with the facts — first. I suspect that if there is going to be a difference between his approach and Bartley's it is that Gigot will be more cau-

tious, less aggressive, and will follow the facts. As Gigot said about his column: "The best commentary is fact-based."

But I was puzzled by a particularly acerbic Rando on the Enron situation earlier that week, on Monday January 14: The headline was "Another Whitewater? Yippee!!" It began by pointing out that the "the misstatement of Enron earnings goes back to 1997, and whatever regulatory depredations contributed to its stock run-up took place under a previous, Democratic administration." The editorial then proceeded to describe what would have to be revealed if Enron were to be a political scandal on a par with Whitewater.

"Laura Bush will launch a campaign suggesting that anyone raising questions about Enron is a part of a 'vast pinko conspiracy,'" read the editorial. "The first year's pattern of behavior will persist, however, through a whole series of questionable Presidential activities involving campaign fund-raising, women, lies and political assaults on anyone raising issues of Presidential responsibility."

And it concluded by saying: "the ultimate lesson may turn out to be that Enron was able to play fast and loose in a financial boom and Clintonian moral climate, and was called to account in a recession when the moral climate had turned Ashcroftian."

Now that's over the top. And, lo and behold, Gigot let it slip that the author of that editorial was none other than Bartley himself.

"We were just sitting around talking the other day and he mentioned he was thinking of a column along those lines but had something else he wanted to write about and I suggested he do it as an editorial," said Gigot.

Gigot finally formulated his Rando on Enron the next day after a long session with his board on all the ins and outs of the scandal. That editorial said:

"Above all, this looks like a case of corporate deceit. Whether or not Enron's actions violated any laws, they certainly violated the public trust essential for free markets to work. For that alone its managers deserve the public stocks."

Gigot pointedly praised the Bush administration for showing the right instincts by not helping Enron out of its predicament, but then added: "A Republican Administration, with its alleged sympathies for markets, has a special burden to police



ROBERT BARTLEY

capitalists who abuse their freedom."

The difference between the Monday and Friday Randos indicate what the difference between the Bartley years and the Gigot years might be.

Admittedly, that is a reading of the tea leaves. Gigot clearly appreciates and understands what has been right about Bartley's pages: their liveliness, their intellectual muscle, their ability to carry on a direct conversation with their readers. And he's too politic to say whether he understands what was wrong with the pages, especially their excesses and tendency at times not to allow the facts to get in the way of a good opinion. He clearly prided himself on writing a column that was well-reported and often enough took unexpected positions, such as when he praised Al Gore last summer, opposed the "immigration-bashing Proposition 187" in California when it was Republican party orthodoxy, or battled "congressional tormentor" John Dingell.

"You do want to surprise people, you do want to sometimes find the hole in the doughnut," said Gigot. "And I do view myself as a reporter. That's how I got started."

No matter how you feel about Bartley, it is clear that Gigot has a large act to follow. His page will be a work in progress. Certainly the underlying conservative approach, the free markets/free men approach, will not change. But he is not Bartley and no doubt the tone and approach will change over time. For now, readers of the page are still waiting for Gigot. ■

James Klurfeld has been vice president and editorial-page editor of *Newsday* since 1987. He has been the paper's Albany bureau chief and Washington bureau chief, and he shared the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service in 1970.

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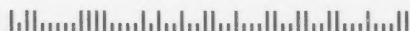
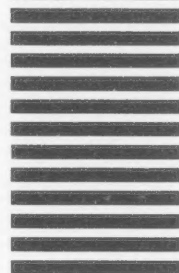
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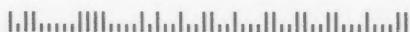
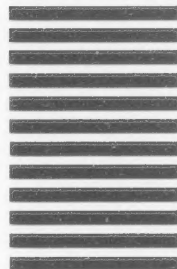
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# The Latino Puzzle

## Challenges the Heartland

*Editors Are Dealing with a Vast Demographic Shift.  
North Carolina Is a Case in Point.*

BY BRENT CUNNINGHAM

In the summer of 1995, as the media in North Carolina were nibbling at the edges of one of the biggest cultural stories of the last hundred years, Mike Leary saw, as he puts it, "a need wrapped up in an opportunity." At the time, Leary, who turns forty in July, ran a courier business that distributed free weekly newspapers. One day, he was filling a rack at a Raleigh convenience store with a paper called *Spectator* when he noticed a group of construction workers speaking Spanish. "They aren't interested in this paper," he thought. So Leary unloaded the courier business, got a night job as a bouncer at Red's Beach Music, scraped together \$3,000, and gave them a paper they did want.

Today, the wiry, bespectacled Leary is publisher of *La Conexión*, which bills itself as "North Carolina's Largest and Most Widely Read Spanish Language Newspaper." He has been called a visionary and a mercenary. Either way, he managed to do something that has editors from Dalton, Georgia, to Salem, Oregon, scratching their heads: reach the legions of working-class Latino immigrants who have streamed deep into the bosom of the United States in the last fifteen years. Each week, 25,000 free copies of *La Conexión* are dropped at bodegas, laundromats, restaurants, and health clinics in central and eastern North Carolina; about 5 percent are returned.

Last year, Raleigh's *News & Observer*,



**Nuestro Pueblo lacks La Conexión's reach.**

one of the state's two major dailies, tried to buy *La Conexión*. The anemic economy scuttled the deal, but Orage Quarles III, the *News & Observer's* publisher, is still interested in a partnership. "It would give us an entrée into the fastest-growing market in the state," says Quarles, who engineered such a partnership between

*The Modesto Bee* and *El Sol* when he was publisher there before coming to Raleigh.

Between 1990 and 2000, the Hispanic population in the United States swelled from 22 million to 35 million, drawing Latinos into a tie with African-Americans as the country's largest minority, at roughly 12 percent each. Most of the growth came not in saturated Latino enclaves of the Southwest and south Florida, but in places like Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, Georgia, and North Carolina, turning the cultures of small towns inside out.

To varying degrees, this "browning" of America, as it has been called, snuck up on the media. It unfolded quietly in the murky world of illegal immigration, in meatpacking plants, on construction sites. When the 2000 Census landed on the nation's doorstep, though, the full scope of how the country was changing became clearer. The press, meanwhile, in towns like Lincoln, Nebraska, and Shelbyville, Tennessee, found itself facing many of the same marketing and coverage problems that *The Miami Herald* and the *Los Angeles Times* began wrestling back in the late 1970s.

To understand how this is developing, *CJR* focused on a corner of North Carolina, a state where the growth of the Latino population over the last decade was among the largest in the nation, from 77,000 to 380,000. In the area known as The Triangle — Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill — Latinos now make up 6.1 percent of the population; still relatively small, until you consider that it grew from nearly nothing in a place where the cultural framework has been black and



white for three hundred years. Since 1999, state spending on English-as-a-second-language programs jumped from \$5 million to \$22 million; and a study by the Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia measured the rise in buying power of North Carolina's Latino community, from \$8.3 million in 1990 to \$2.3 billion in 1999.

The challenge for the press — in North Carolina and elsewhere — is to integrate these new communities into their daily coverage and also cultivate the essential new readers and viewers that they represent. It requires a commitment of time and money that is difficult to make, particularly in a weak economy. There are many obstacles: language and cultural barriers, high illiteracy rates, large numbers of undocumented workers, class issues within the Latino communities, the fact that our economy depends on this steady supply of cheap but often illegal labor.

In all of this, of course, the failure to diversify our newsrooms looms large.

Nevertheless, many of the same experiments begun years ago in Miami and elsewhere are under way again in the nation's heartland. Mike Leary solved the puzzle by joining the Latino community. He met his wife, Lupita, an immigrant from Monterrey, Mexico, through *La Conexión*. She taught him Spanish on the bar stools at Red's. Today, Leary says, he speaks more Spanish than English most days. "We are absolutely an advocate for the community," he says of his paper.

For the rest of the media, it isn't that simple.

## THE ROAD BACK

In March 1998, *The News & Observer* published a powerful story about an undocumented Mexican immigrant, Julio Granados, that took readers into his dreams, his faith, and his fears. The piece — written by a reporter who is fluent in Spanish — included Granados's full name, the grocery store where he worked, and a detailed account of his illegal border crossing. Two weeks after the article ran, INS agents raided the grocery store. They reportedly taunted Granados with the *News & Observer* article, then arrested him and five others. Granados was eventually deported, and the paper's budding relationship with the Latino community tanked.

Anders Gyllenhaal, the *News & Observer's* executive editor, wrote a column



Ned Glascock: mending fences

in which he acknowledged a lack of sensitivity to the likely consequences of the story for Granados, but raised other questions that are more difficult to answer. How to cover this story without becoming an advocate for illegal immigration? How to get beyond the us-them framework and write inclusively about Latinos?

The episode has become something of a touchstone for discussions about the media coverage of the Latino community in the Triangle. There is pre-Julio Granados and post-Julio Granados.

Ned Glascock, a veteran reporter at *The News & Observer*, stepped willingly into this breach. "I put my hand up and said, 'Let me cover this,'" he says. The paper's minority affairs beat had been vacant since 1997. After Granados, the editors renamed it Demographics and Culture and gave it to Glascock.

His November 1998 series, "Underground in Carolina," on the parallel worlds of immigrants in Durham and their families back in the tiny mountain village of Pahuatlán, Mexico, was, as Glascock says, "the paper's response to Julio Granados." He and photographer Robert Miller spent six months on the piece, including ten days in Mexico where they met, among others, a mother who many nights has only bread and coffee to give her children while their father works construction in the Triangle. They did not use the full names of the immigrants in Durham, or say precisely where they lived and worked. "I knew intellectually the reasons people were immigrating here," Glascock says, "but this gave me a more personal understanding of the economic desperation that causes people to uproot their lives, the tremendous toll it takes on

families, and also the tremendous change occurring in both places as a result."

To find the families for his story, Glascock says he first asked the Latino advocates for help. Still nursing their anger over Julio Granados, they politely declined. So he began knocking on doors after work. "I knew that these were working-class immigrants, mainly from rural parts of Mexico, and that in their social structure they are used to being on the bottom, to having to pay their respects to everyone," he says. So he addressed them formally, asking permission to talk. "They weren't used to having someone who could conceivably be their boss address them with that level of respect."

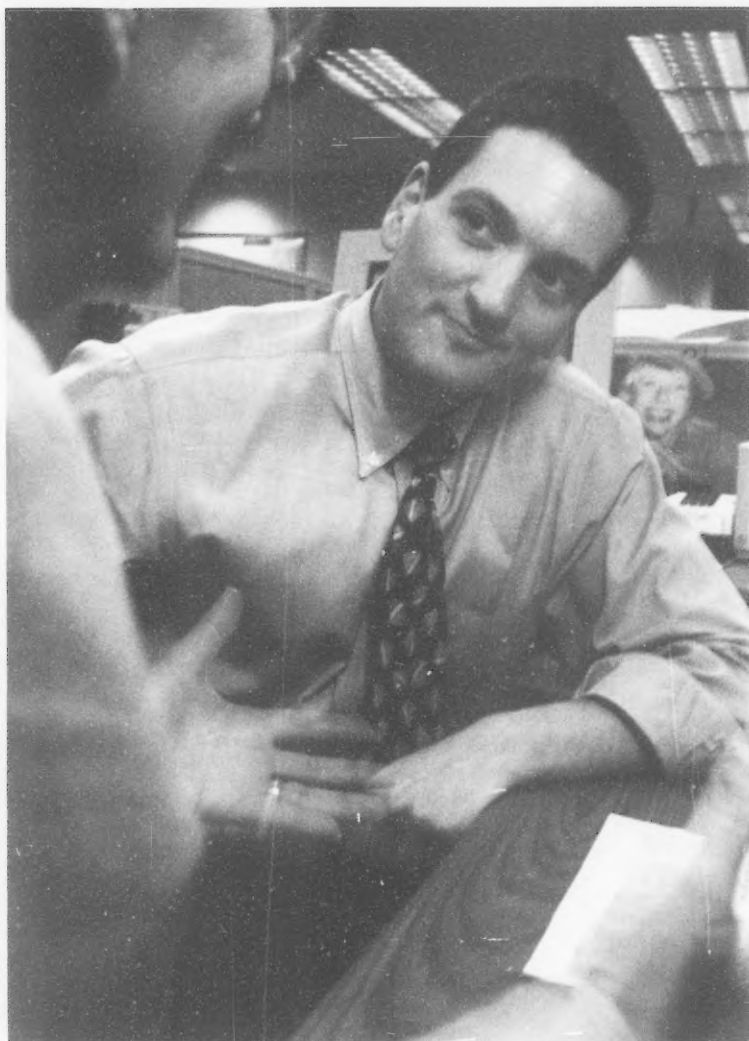
The response, at times, was more than Glascock bargained for. "One of them asks me to try a delicacy from his village," he says. "He comes back with this jar of huge, dried black ants. I thought he was kidding, but then he started munching on them. So I did, too. We bonded over dried ants."

While Glascock broadened his cultural — and culinary — horizons, the editors added a new minority education issues beat and offered free Spanish lessons to reporters. The paper just hired a Latina sports writer, giving it eleven reporters who speak enough Spanish to conduct interviews. But *The News & Observer's* broader strategy remains, as Melanie Sill, the paper's managing editor, says, "a work in progress."

A partnership with *La Conexión* would be a major piece of the puzzle, particularly from a marketing standpoint; but it would not solve many of the coverage problems. "If you are trying to shift the paper to reflect changes in your community," says Gyllenhaal, "it is a whole different set of challenges. Progress is harder to measure."

## COVERAGE EVOLVES

One way to measure progress is through the evolution of more sophisticated coverage. "There is a difference between cultural sensitivity and cultural competency," says H. Nolo Martinez, director of Hispanic/Latino affairs for North Carolina's Governor Mike Easley. "If you are just talking about sensitivity, then you don't know what you don't know." Much of the early coverage of the Latino communities in and around Raleigh focused, predictably, on the numbers (the rapid growth), the differences (the festivals, the foods), and the problems (overwhelmed



**SPANISH LESSONS:** Mark Schultz is nudging his paper toward a bilingual future.

schools, a rubella outbreak). Too often, says Keith Woods, a diversity specialist at the Poynter Institute, this is where coverage stalls. "These human pathology stories are legitimate stories in the life of reporting on cultural change," he says. "But they are the easiest stories to get at, they require the least amount of internal knowledge and understanding of the community."

A two-part series in *The Independent*, an alternative weekly in nearby Durham with a reputation for solid investigative journalism, about a Hispanic Baptist church in Siler City, got it right, Woods says. The author, Barry Yeoman, is a free-lance writer in Durham who has written about Latino immigrants for *Mother Jones* and *The Nation*. "He had to go in and learn the community from the

ground up," says Woods. "What you see when you read his stories is a presentation of people who are people of faith, people of love, of longing — all the universal human feelings that draw people to stories are there. But in the course of that you also get the information about the growth of the Latino community in this region, the numbers, the problems."

Yeoman says he started reporting the piece in his spare time in the spring of 1999, and didn't take out his notebook until October. "I had to unlearn a lot," he says. "I had to set aside my preconceptions about religion, for instance, especially about evangelical Christianity."

In the same way, with "Underground in Carolina," Glascock had the time and the inclination to see the story through another's

eyes (ironically, just what *The News & Observer* was aiming for with Julio Grana-dos). But this depth of understanding is hard to get on a daily basis, and it cannot filter through an entire newsroom overnight. Frank del Olmo, an associate editor at the *Los Angeles Times*, says that learning how to cover southern California's Latino community has been a twenty-year process, full of good and bad decisions. The answer, ultimately, was to simply add Spanish-speaking reporters to existing beats whose focus is finding Latino angles to everyday stories. "We try to figure out if there is a different way that Latinos view the same issues that everyone else is dealing with," says del Olmo. "If there isn't, okay, but at least we ask the questions."

## ONE-MAN SHOW

While the once-bitten *News & Observer* leans toward partnering with an established Spanish-language paper, *The Herald-Sun*, a 50,000-circulation family-owned paper thirty miles northeast of Raleigh, in Durham, has placed its bet on an idea that has had mixed results nationally: launch your own.

*Nuestro Pueblo*, the *Herald-Sun's* monthly Spanish-language tabloid, is the darling of Durham's Latino community. It began as a bilingual column in 1998, and was the first major effort by the English-language media in North Carolina to deliver news in Spanish. There are plenty of problems with it — circulation is inconsistent, for instance, and because it is free there is no reliable way to measure who is reading it. But, as John Herrera, a native of Costa Rica who started the state's first Latino community credit union, says, "Three years ago we were begging for a single page."

In September 2000 *Nuestro Pueblo* went monthly, and today ten thousand copies of the sixteen-page paper are dropped at fifty-five locations in two counties. There is talk of making it weekly, but that will require selling enough ads to justify it.

Orchestrating all this — on a budget of \$3,000 a month — is Mark Schultz, the *Herald-Sun's* night metro editor. The forty-one-year-old Schultz, a Long Islander who landed in Durham thirteen years ago, is his paper's Latino strategy. "Everything we've done in this regard is attributable to Mark," says Bill Hawkins, the *Herald-Sun's* executive editor. Schultz created *Nuestro Pueblo*, edits it, shoots photos, and writes for it. He also pulls together a bilingual page that runs in *The*

## 'There is definitely a learning curve, and it won't be a learning curve of months, but rather of years.'

*Herald-Sun* each Friday. It all adds fifteen to twenty unpaid hours a week to his schedule. "I have no kids, nothing pulling me away," he says. "A lot of why people go into journalism is because it's creative. What's more creative than creating something completely new?"

Right now, the monthly is a mix of features, columns, resource lists, news briefs, and the occasional hard-news story. The three grand covers the cost of columnists, delivery, and advertising commissions. "I would love to make it more in-depth," says Schultz. "I don't know how quickly that will happen. I think you need to have a reporter assigned to the beat so that he or she can develop expertise and sources." There won't be, at least not anytime soon. Bill Hawkins is aware of this need, but says the current economic climate doesn't afford him "the luxury of adding staff." In January he informed the newsroom that there would be no raises this year.

Therein lies a dilemma for small papers like *The Herald-Sun*, since *Nuestro Pueblo* is only half of the equation. It is, as much as anything, an attempt to build brand loyalty among a population that will eventually be bilingual. Even if *Nuestro Pueblo* goes weekly and gets newsier, this won't change the fact that — to cover the Latino community the way it covers education — *The Herald-Sun* needs more Spanish-speakers and a greater commitment of time.

### HOME-GROWN TALENT

In December Harris Teeter, the Charlotte-based chain of grocery stores, fired dozens of Latino workers at its stores in the Triangle after a warning from the Social Security Administration that many of their employees' numbers were fraudulent. The twice-weekly *Chapel Hill News* broke the story just before Christmas, but only after Maria Palmer, the pastor of a Hispanic church in Chapel Hill, alerted editors there. More than a week after the *News* piece ran, *The Herald-Sun* followed up. Its one and only source from the Latino community? Maria Palmer.

"They are used to having the story handed to them," says Palmer, "because what they have covered has been primarily the festivals, the cutesy stories. We need

other kinds of coverage of the Hispanic community. There are ugly stories like this that require investigative journalism."

Part of the problem is simply a matter of time. Claudia Assis, the reporter who wrote the Harris Teeter story for *The Herald-Sun*, is a native of Brazil who also speaks Spanish. But her primary beat is a county north of Durham, which sometimes leaves her little time for Latino issues. The day the Harris Teeter story came her way, for instance, Assis was in the middle of another story. "There was no way I could have gone out to a Harris Teeter store to find people to talk to," she says.

Language is a more fundamental barrier. With so few reporters who can speak Spanish, the media rely too heavily on bilingual advocates, like Maria Palmer, who find themselves speaking for a diverse Latino population in story after story. Schultz and Assis are the only ones in the *Herald-Sun* newsroom who speak enough Spanish to conduct complex interviews (and Schultz says he still struggles). Last year, the paper paid for thirteen weeks of Spanish lessons for anyone who wanted them, and Schultz took an immersion course in Guatemala, also on the paper's dime.

Few papers in this country have done a good job hiring — and retaining — minority journalists, but papers like *The Herald-Sun* have a particularly difficult time. For many young journalists — Latino or otherwise — these small pa-

pers are the first or second stop on their way to larger dailies.

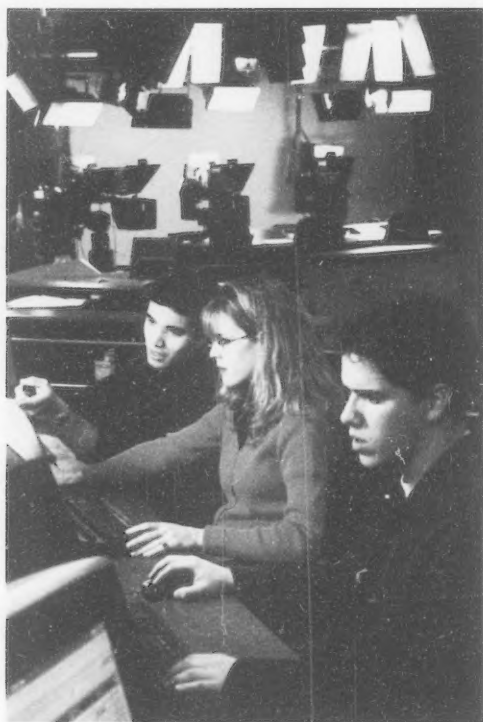
But there are success stories, and cultivating talent within the local Latino community — through community colleges, mentor programs, and internships — is the key. "Hiring Spanish speakers can be done, but it requires taking risks and being creative," says Deborah Fisher, editor of the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, a 63,000 circulation daily on Texas's Gulf Coast. Five years ago, Fisher's newsroom was 18 percent minority. Today it is 37 percent minority, with most of that growth coming from Latino hires. They did it, Fisher says, by working with local community colleges. "We brought them in as news assistants while they were still in school," Fisher says, "trained them, and then hired them when they graduated."

That's how Rick Rodriguez, the executive editor of *The Sacramento Bee*, got his start in journalism. In the early 1970s he was finishing high school in Salinas, California, when the editor of the local newspaper recruited him as a news clerk. Now he runs a paper that is one of only a few to have reached parity between its minority staff and the minority population in the community, at roughly 28 percent. "You have to get people in high school and track them, keep them interested in journalism," he says. "Just last year we started working with a high school in Sacramento that is largely Hispanic, providing mentors, providing advisers for

CHANGE AGENT: Aura Maas plugs WRAL's simulcast at a Salvadoran restaurant in Raleigh.







**LAS NOTICIAS:** Translators arrive at 3 P.M. to prepare for WRAL's 6 P.M. newscast.

their newspaper. You may even have to go to the junior high level, but we haven't done that yet."

At *The Herald-Sun*, Schultz understands that *Nuestro Pueblo* is only a beginning. He worries that without a broader strategy, his monthly will become the paper's Latino ghetto. "Are we fostering segregation with this kind of coverage? I don't know the answer, but I think if we are still doing this in five years, I'm not sure that will be a good thing."

## TV'S EDGE

When Time Warner Cable announced the addition of nine Spanish-language channels to its menu for Raleigh subscribers in January, it was big news. The upstairs bar at the El Rodeo Mexican restaurant was crammed with TV cameras, reporters, and leaders of North Carolina's fledgling Latino elite. "If

you go into a neighborhood around here and want to know where the Latinos live," says John Herrera, "look for the satellite dishes."

Even without a dish, television seems the way to reach homesick Latinos, not just in North Carolina but across the country. There are seven Spanish-language networks (one of them, Telemundo, was purchased last year by NBC), and the regular networks have begun working this market, too. *The Simpsons*, *World News Tonight with Peter Jennings*, *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, and *Monday Night Football* are all available in Spanish. Given the high rate of illiteracy among the new immigrants, television enjoys a clear advantage over print in terms of reaching these communities.

Outside of Los Angeles and other established Latino enclaves, local TV news has been slow to exploit this advantage. In Atlanta, WSB-TV, the ABC affiliate, began simulcasting its evening news in Spanish two years ago. In Memphis, WHBQ-TV, the Fox affiliate, airs one story each Friday with Spanish subtitles. But that's about it.

In Raleigh, Aura Camacho Maas is speeding things up a bit. She began by helping WRAL-TV, the city's CBS station, become the first in North Carolina to simulcast its evening newscast in Spanish. "Many in this new wave of immigration are illiterate," Maas says, "and I feel it is critical to tune in at the local level in order to integrate as quickly as possible."

Maas, a native of Colombia who came to Raleigh eighteen years ago from Chicago, is not a journalist. She runs the Latin American Resource Center, an educational outreach operation she founded in the early 1990s. Three years ago, she began bugging TV news executives about doing something in Spanish. Maas made little headway until she connected with John Harris, special projects director at WRAL, in late 1999. "We had been thinking about it — and had tried to partner with some Spanish-language radio stations — but until we hooked up with Aura, we couldn't find a true partner," he says. "She provided the expertise we lacked."

Maas brought the translators and some seed money, and WRAL — which was in the process of renovating its studio — added a booth for simultaneous translation. Now, the station's six o'clock newscast can be heard in Spanish Monday through Friday on a separate audio frequency on newer TVs and VCRs. What viewers get is essentially a dubbed newscast minus the ambient sound. A

## THE BOOK THAT EVERY CITIZEN & JOURNALIST SHOULD READ

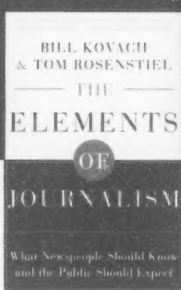
Journalism is going through a crisis of conscience, confidence, and purpose. In the acclaimed *Elements of Journalism*, Bill Kovach, chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists, and Tom Rosenstiel, director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, identify the nine enduring principles that define journalism as a profession. These principles are of vital importance to all of us, not only journalists themselves, but everyone who takes seriously the needs and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society. New to the paperback edition: A Citizen's Bill of Rights.

"*The Elements of Journalism* is the most important book on the relationship of journalism and democracy published in the last 50 years."

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"What this book does better than any single book on media history, ethics or practice is weave . . . [together] why media audiences have fled and why new technology and megacorporate ownership are putting good journalism at risk."

—Rasmi Simhan, *The Boston Globe*



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piece about Nascar racing, for instance, would lack the roar of the engines.

One major problem is that no one knows who is watching. Nielsen does not measure this second-audio channel, so the only feedback is anecdotal.

Another problem, critics say, is that those Latinos who do tune in don't often see their world reflected in the news, unless it is through a narrowly defined "Latino story." "In case of emergencies — a hurricane, or a snowstorm — the simulcast could make a life or death difference," says John Herrera. "But at this point the daily content is not usually what Latinos want."

In part, this is because local TV news, with some notable exceptions, is generally not a forum for in-depth reporting on any subject, let alone Latino immigrants. A national study last year by The Project for Excellence in Journalism found that 40 percent of local TV news stories ran thirty seconds or less, and there were as many stories about the "bizarre" as about civic institutions. A sampling of WRAL's Latino coverage, provided by the station, includes some good, but fairly predictable work. There were pieces — ranging from ninety to 160 seconds — on a hurricane preparedness project (organized by Maas's center), the Harris Teeter layoffs, and a church that offers mass in Spanish. The most sophisticated of the stories — at four minutes — followed a sixteen-year-old Latina through her pregnancy.

But TV news also faces some of the same problems as print: limited sources in the Latino communities and few reporters who speak Spanish. WRAL recently hired its first Spanish-speaking reporter. "I really believe that the way to improve our coverage in this area is by having a diverse group sitting around the table discussing what to cover and how to cover it," says Harris. "This is a first step toward that."

Maas's answer to the content problem is to produce her own show. She first tried to work something out with WRAL, but when that fell through she turned to NBC-17, the local affiliate. The half-hour public affairs show, still in the planning stages, will air one Sunday a month beginning in May, in Spanish with English subtitles. "You rarely see a story about someone in the Latino community who isn't needing something, but rather is providing something," says Maas. Now, she says, you will.

For NBC-17, Maas's show jump-starts a largely dormant effort to cover the Latino community. The station recently lost one of its two Spanish-speaking reporters

## A Home-Grown Solution to the Diversity Dilemma

**A**fter a knee injury ended her twenty-year run as a pipefitter in a Savannah, Georgia, paper mill, fifty-two-year-old Margaret Bailey promptly embarked on another career — as a journalist. In the summer of 1999, Bailey, who is African-American, became part of the inaugural class of the *Savannah Morning News's* "Neighborhood Newsroom" program. The program is aimed at cracking one of journalism's most glaring failures: an inability to hire and keep journalists of color. Last year, for the first time since the American Society of Newspaper Editors began its annual newsroom survey, the percentage of minorities dropped. Dan Suwyn, the *Morning News's* managing editor, says his newsroom — which is 10 percent minority in a town that is 55 percent African-American — typically keeps talented journalists of color "a year or two" before they bolt to bigger papers.

The "Neighborhood Newsroom" program finds "people in the know" in poor and minority communities, and trains them in the basics of journalism. They then contribute to the paper on a free-lance basis.

The growth of Latino immigration in the last ten years has further spotlighted the need for more diverse newsrooms, and programs like Savannah's are drawing attention. Bailey, who says becoming a journalist was the "furthest thing from her mind" when she lost her pipefitting job, is now among the finalists for a new Freedom Forum program with the same goals as "Neighborhood Newsroom." In June ten to twelve people — all from racial or ethnic minorities — will go through a twelve-week journalistic boot camp at Vanderbilt University. Those who emerge in September are guaranteed jobs at newspapers in their hometowns. "By training people who already have established lives in their community, they will be less likely to leave," says Wanda Lloyd, who runs the Freedom Forum's Diversity Institute.

A second class of ten begins in late September, and starting in 2003 classes will grow to twenty. Candidates must be sponsored by a local daily newspaper, and that paper must agree to hire them once they successfully complete the course. — B.C.

and its only Spanish-speaking assignment desk editor. "The extent of our coverage has been the typical local stories about issues, such as discrimination, that cropped up," says Mike Ward, president and general manager at NBC-17. "This is a fairly robust attempt to more directly address the issues and provide a forum for discussion."

## YEARS, NOT MONTHS

There has long been a Latino presence in the U.S., and millions of Hispanics have adapted and prospered here. But over the last decade or so a new wave of immigrants arrived. There is, suddenly, this entire Latino subculture — cleaning hotels, building houses, gutting chickens. By mid-century, Latinos are projected to make up about a quarter of the U.S. population. But the joys and needs and contributions of the people in these new communities, to say nothing of their legal status, are not yet part of the national conversation, despite President Bush's pre-September 11 talk of granting amnesty to illegal immigrants.

There will be some resistance. When the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* printed one page of a twenty-four-page special section in Spanish the day after Septem-

ber 11, for example, readers howled. The paper was creating, callers said, the false hope that English is unnecessary. This at a paper that has published a Spanish-language sister paper, *La Estrella*, in some form since 1994.

The media — not just *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, but also *The Herald-Sun* and *The News & Observer* — have the power to start this conversation, and some have begun to try. *The Emporia Gazette* in Emporia, Kansas — a town of 27,000 whose Latino population jumped 184 percent in ten years — began publishing a Spanish-language insert, *La Voz Latina*, in 1997; the *Statesman Journal* in Salem, Oregon, publishes the occasional piece in Spanish; in Shelbyville, Tennessee, the *Times-Gazette* started a weekly insert in 2000; and in Florence, Alabama, the *Times-Daily* produced a translated page once a week for almost a year until the losses forced editors to rethink their strategy. "I applaud the editors that are taking those first steps," says Rick Rodriguez, of *The Sacramento Bee*. "And they will be, by necessity, baby steps. There is a definite learning curve, and it won't be a learning curve of months, but rather of years." ■

Brent Cunningham is CJR's managing editor.

*How you saw the war in Afghanistan depended in part on which window you were looking through. Over the next eleven pages CJR examines some of the differences in perspective on that conflict and other events in the Middle East. Below, Neil Hickey compares television coverage in the West with that of Al Jazeera, the twenty-four-hour Qatar-based network. Rick Zednik, on page 44, gets an inside look at Al Jazeera. And on page 48, George Kennedy compares war coverage in U.S. newspapers with those of America's closest ally, Great Britain — and finds a somewhat different story.*

# PERSPECTIVES ON WAR

## *Different Cultures, Different Coverage*

BY NEIL HICKEY

**F**or a rough comparison between coverage on Al Jazeera, which feeds the interests of its 35 million Arabic-speaking viewers, with coverage in the West, CJR chose a handful of recent news events. Al Jazeera provided tapes of its handling of those events. The BBC did the same for its own reporting. We acquired transcripts of coverage by CNN and the three major broadcast networks. George Saliba, professor of Arabic and Islamic Science at Columbia University's department of Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures, translated and analyzed the Al Jazeera videotapes. In addition, a CJR contributor in Jerusalem, Stephen Franklin, videotaped four days chosen at random (January 14, 15, 17, 18) on Al Jazeera's principal daily newscast, Hassad al Yawm, and wrote detailed summaries. In the U.S., we compiled transcripts of the

ABC, CBS, NBC, and CNN evening news broadcasts for those same dates. The results provide some perspective. A few examples:

■ **THE BOMBING CAMPAIGN BEGINS, OCTOBER 7:** CNN's reports on that dramatic afternoon came from correspondents in remote parts of Afghanistan who were far removed from the bomb targets. The news was "filtering out very slowly because of the lack of communication and infrastructure," a CNN correspondent told anchor Aaron Brown. The network aired reaction to the bombing from Shimon Peres, Israel's foreign minister; from the French president, Jacques Chirac; from New York's mayor, Rudolph Giuliani; and from leaders of the U.S. Congress. Other reports came from the White House and the Pentagon.

Meanwhile, Al Jazeera's cameras and correspondents were in the very streets of Kabul, shooting tape of the rubble, interviewing citizens whose homes had

been destroyed. Al Jazeera's great advantage in covering the Afghan war is that it has been a presence in the country for years, with unique access to its splintered factions and warlords. The network was allowed to remain in Kabul after the Taliban ordered Western journalists out. And it speaks the language of Afghans at the street level.

Al Jazeera's anchorman described the air assault on Taliban forces, but then quickly shifted viewers' attention to how the bombing had affected Kabul's civilians in poor neighborhoods. People displaced from their homes wondered to Al Jazeera if they would survive later bombardments, and where their food would come from. "Though the U.S. and British attacks supposedly have been focused on specific targets," the voice-over declared, "they don't always hit those targets." One old man was pictured squatting on the rubble of his house, and throwing fistfuls of dirt toward the

## Analyzing Some Key Events: THE BOMBING CAMPAIGN BEGINS, OCTOBER 7



Al Jazeera's cameras captured Kabul civilians close-up in the immediate aftermath of the first bombing. Amid the rubble, they asked where their food would come from. Neighborhood people helped a friend rebuild his house.

camera in frustration. The U.S. has advised its people to be patient during a long campaign, said the reporter. But the people of Kabul have nothing to be patient about except their own poverty and hunger, he said — a patience they have been known for throughout history.

On that October 7, Peter Jennings used Al Jazeera's reports on the bombing's progress, before turning to ABC's hired military analysts in the U.S., and to a phone interview from Pakistan with Ahmed Rashid, an expert on the Taliban; another phoner with former national security adviser Sandy Berger in Shanghai, and live chats with correspondents Bob Woodruff in Quetta, Pakistan, and David Wright, somewhere with the Northern Alliance. "We're just whistling in the wind" about the extent of the bombing, Jennings admitted, "until we get an official briefing from the Pentagon."

Correspondents at the other U.S. networks had a comparable, distant view of the action. NBC's Tom Aspell was forty miles from Kabul watching "some flashes of anti-aircraft fire a long way to the south of us." CBS's Jim Axelrod said he was speaking "from a mountain path about twenty miles

northeast of Kabul." Both networks had other war news from the White House and the Pentagon. But, as worthy as the American reporting was, Al Jazeera's — on that occasion at least — conveyed far more of the human truth of a massive bombing attack and its effects at ground zero.

■ **THE FALL OF KABUL, NOVEMBER 13:** Once again, Al Jazeera's cameras mingle with the crowds for close-in pictures of Afghan faces, some of them joyous as Northern Alliance forces take control of the city; others bewildered, as they see alliance soldiers kicking the bodies of dead Taliban fighters and angrily yanking the beards of others. Says Professor Saliba, watching the videotape: "Al Jazeera's focus shifts quickly from the military people as they enter the city, to the Kabul population, who are seen immediately in the midst of war, trying to find a way to survive in these very chaotic conditions."

For the BBC, correspondent John Simpson had himself filmed striding along the road toward Kabul like a conquering hero, surrounded by happy children, and announcing (rather prema-

turely) "the end of the Taliban, the most extreme religious system anywhere on earth." Under the Taliban, he explained, young girls had been denied an education, men could be whipped for shaving, music and chess were banned. "Freedom is in the air here," he declared grandly.

CNN's Matthew Chance in Kabul offered more context than either Al Jazeera or the BBC, predicting correctly that the city might return to the "bitter ethnic factional infighting" that had ravaged it before the Taliban took over in 1996. And NBC's Aspell — after reporting that Taliban fighters were lynched, stoned, and left in ditches — announced that Al Jazeera's own headquarters in Kabul had suffered damage, "not by looting crowds, but from American bombs. Overnight, U.S. missiles struck the station." It was accidental, American officials said later.

■ **TERRORIST BOMBINGS IN JERUSALEM, DECEMBER 1:** When two suicide bombs and a car bomb exploded near a pedestrian mall in Jerusalem within an hour, eight Israelis were left dead and more than 180 in-

## THE FALL OF KABUL, NOVEMBER 13



Al Jazeera showed Northern Alliance troops entering Kabul. On the BBC, correspondent John Simpson (center) strode into the conquered city. CNN's Matthew Chance foresaw the return of factional infighting.



jured. Al Jazeera's coverage focused more on subsequent events in Palestine — the arrest by Palestinian police of people suspected of having a connection to the bombings — than on the scene of terror in Jerusalem's streets and the images of bloodied victims. Is this because the network's cameras are not wholly welcome in Jewish neighborhoods, or for reasons connected to the sentiments of the viewers?

A spokesman for Yasir Arafat's Palestinian Authority declares that the group observes the rule of law, and that one cannot be a bomber and presume he's acting in the Authority's best interests. Al Jazeera's reporter puts the bombings in the context of a retaliation for an earlier assassination by Israelis of a Hamas leader. "What the reporter tries to keep impressing upon us," says Professor Saliba, "is that there is a sequence to these events. The viewer comes away with the understanding that there is a vicious cycle — a retaliation. The Al Jazeera reporter reminds you that we are in that cycle of viciousness."

CNN, for its part, showed exclusive videotape of the devastation, the fear and the hysteria in the streets of Jerusalem, residents fleeing for safety, the bloodied victims on gurneys en route to hospitals, the efforts of police and firefighters to contain the damage. Then: reactions from Israeli and Palestinian officials. "What difference between Arafat's regime and the Taliban?" asks Anan Gissin, a spokesman for the Israeli prime minister. "He has the largest terrorist coalition from here to Afghanistan, with Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, all of which have tentacles around the world." But hasn't Arafat arrested Palestinian suspects in the Jerusalem bombings, CNN's man inquires? "He arrests retired terrorists," Gissin answers. "He leaves the active ones to continue."

Saeb Erakat, chief Palestinian negotiator, is at pains to insist that Arafat has indeed condemned "these attacks tonight," but he reminds CNN that Palestinians "are under total Israel siege. We have our people being killed. We have more settlements being built." Negotiation, he says, is the only way to end the cycle of "violence and counter-violence."

On ABC, retired general Anthony Zinni, the American negotiator, was calling the bombings "the lowest form of inhumanity that can be imagined." NBC's Keith Miller in Tel Aviv said time was running out for Arafat. The BBC's man on

the scene said, "There is a sense here that this conflict is slipping beyond hope."

■ **ARAFAT BANNED FROM BETHLEHEM, DECEMBER 24:** In solidarity with Palestine's 50,000 Christians, Arafat traditionally has accompanied Christian leaders and clergy to midnight Mass on Christmas Eve in Bethlehem. In December, he was prevented from doing so — held in virtual house arrest in Ramallah by the Israelis following the wave of suicide bombings against Israel earlier in the month. When high-level Christian clergy visited Arafat to wish him well before proceeding to Bethlehem, Al Jazeera's cameras

emotions, and with comment from Israeli officials. "You can't harbor terrorists and at the same time present yourself as the champion of Christianity and peace," the Israeli spokesman Gissen told ABC. "Words, words, words from Yasir Arafat!" an aide to prime minister Ariel Sharon complained to CNN. In failing to arrest known Palestinian extremists, the PLO leader had shown himself to be "a master of words, but no action."

Still, the U.S. coverage was even more expansive than Al Jazeera's in reporting the alleged insult to Arafat and the Christian Palestinians. The Israelis even ignored an appeal from the Pope to let

#### THE FALL OF KABUL, NOVEMBER 13



On Al Jazeera: an alliance fighter yanks the beard of a suspected enemy soldier. Another kicks the dead body of a fallen Taliban.

showed Monsignor Michel Sabbah, the ranking Roman Catholic prelate in the Holy Land, addressing an outdoor gathering and expressing the hope that the Christmas season would help lead to "peace and justice." As an expression of dismay over Arafat's exclusion from Bethlehem, the clergyman seized the moment to send a message to the Israeli population. The capacity to bring peace was in their hands, he said, since they are the most powerful force in the region. Al Jazeera filmed the clerics departing Ramallah in their cars, which were inspected by Israeli forces to assure that Arafat was not being smuggled to Bethlehem.

Reporting later from Bethlehem, Al Jazeera's correspondent said the Christmas festivities were more somber than in past years because of the heightened tensions. His videotape showed bullet marks and other signs of destruction on the town's buildings; nothing could disguise the intensity, he said, of earlier Israeli bombardment. Nevertheless, the hostilities "could not wipe the smiles from the faces of children who, on this major feast day, are hoping for the feast of their own independence."

The American networks reported the facts with less tilt toward Palestinian

Arafat go to Bethlehem, CBS told its viewers. The Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, according to CBS's man in Bethlehem, called Israel's decision "an affront to the dignity of all Palestinians and hardly in the Christmas spirit."

#### FOUR DAYS IN JANUARY

By mid-January, the Taliban and Al Qaeda forces had largely been routed in Afghanistan. Al Jazeera and Western TV news organizations shifted most of their attention elsewhere, with Al Jazeera resuming its heavy emphasis on coverage of Palestine. On January 14, for example, the network's lead story was about the car-bomb assassination by the Israelis, and burial, of Raed Karmi, a leading member of the militant Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. The network's reporter failed to mention Israeli accusations about how many people Karmi had killed, which would have provided a context for the story. Videotape showed the destroyed car, Karmi's body, and his fellow fighters kissing his body and touching their fingers to his blood. A top Palestinian activist calls Karmi "one of the most respected leaders of the Al Aqsa Brigade" and condemns the Israelis for breaking the cease-fire.



ABC's Gillian Findlay in Jerusalem, recalling that Karmi had been number one on Israel's Most Wanted list, reported he'd admitted killing Israeli civilians. An Israeli spokesman is shown saying: "I think this accident which happened to him is a nice end to his career." Israel declined to admit, Findlay noted, that it had planted the bomb that killed Karmi. The Brigade announced it would no longer abide by Arafat's cease-fire agreement. "Three hours later," she reported, "two Israeli soldiers were shot — one killed — not far from where Raed Karmi died." On CBS, anchorman John Roberts said that Israel's only comment on the Karmi assassination was: "He who lives by the sword dies by the sword."

Near the close of Al Jazeera's newscast that day, the anchorman showed a photo of President Bush, saying he had choked and fainted after eating what the newscast called "a salty cookie."

The next day, January 15, the U.S. networks were heavy with news about John Walker Lindh, the American-born Taliban fighter, but Al Jazeera showed zero interest in that story in favor of a full menu of Palestine-based reports: the arrest by Palestinians themselves of Ahmet Saadat, leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, whose group allegedly had assassinated Rehavam Zeevi, a member of the Israeli Knesset. That story reverberated with Palestinians because many harbor anger about the rounding up of their own militants under pressure from the Israelis.

Also: an interview in Washington with Judith Kipper at the Center for Strategic and International Studies on American policies in the Middle East; a report on a Washington press conference held by African-Americans who support the Palestinian cause; plus several stories from Lebanon of clear interest to Islamic activists in Palestine. Thus, there was no overlap that day between Al Jazeera's catering to its audience's special interests, and that of American TV newscasts.

All three of the major U.S. broadcast networks plus CNN gave important coverage on January 17 to the release of videotapes showing five young Islamists vowing to commit future suicide terrorist attacks. The tapes were discovered in the Kabul house of a top bin Laden aide killed in November. The Justice Department released the tapes worldwide in the hope that the five men might be appre-

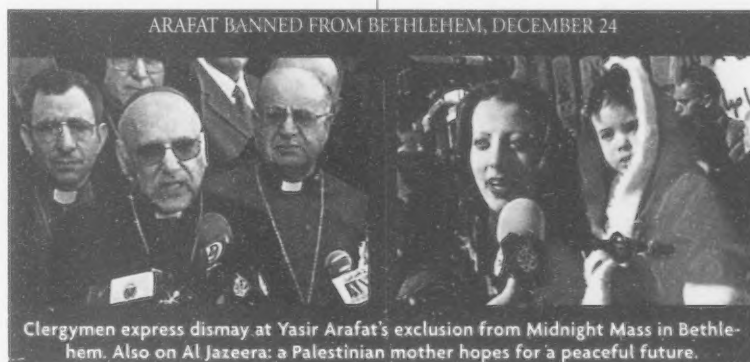
hended before they had a chance to conduct terrorist acts in the U.S.

A second major story on American networks that night: the murder of six Israelis and the wounding of thirty others at a bat mitzvah party, when a terrorist connected to the Al Aqsa Brigade burst into the banquet room and sprayed the celebrants with gunfire. He was shot dead. The attack was revenge for Israel's assassination earlier in the week of Raed Karmi.

Al Jazeera treated both of those stories eventually, but on January 17 the *al Hasad* newscast opted for a list of stories about Palestine and other hot spots in the

attack in Hadera, but offered few details, failing to note that the victims were attending a bat mitzvah and that the gunman crashed the event at a crowded banquet hall. Reporting the Israeli retaliation for that bloodshed — an air attack by F-16 warplanes on a Palestinian security compound in Tulkarem — Al Jazeera quoted a moderate Palestinian spokesperson, Hanan Ashrawi, calling the Israeli air strike an "escalation" of the hostilities.

U.S. networks showed amateur video of the bat mitzvah massacre, and also a video made earlier by the Palestinian killer, twenty-four-year-old Abdel Salam Hassouna, who is seen declaring: "I am doing



Arab world: Ahmet Quera, a spokesman for moderate Palestinians, expressed disappointment that Anthony Zinni was not returning to the region. (The reason, which went unremarked by Al Jazeera, was American frustration with the collapse of the cease-fire, which U.S. diplomats, rightly or wrongly, blamed on the Palestinians.) Colonel Jibril Rajoub, an intelligence expert, tells Al Jazeera: "The cancellation of Zinni's visit is the result of the impact of the Jewish lobby on the U.S. administration."

Other stories that day on Al Jazeera: from Islamabad, on the Pakistan-India hostilities. From Damascus, a condemnation by George Habash, the aged leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, of the arrest of a PFLP leader in the West Bank under "the direction of the Americans and the Israelis." From Saudi Arabia, a complaint about the way Saudi citizens are being treated in the U.S. in the wake of September 11. From Baghdad, pictures of Sadaam Hussein addressing crowds on the anniversary of the Gulf War. ("America will have to change the way it behaves toward the world," he says.)

Near the top of its January 18 newscast, *Hassad al Yawm* reported the suicide

this to avenge all the Palestinian martyrs."

NBC's Martin Fletcher in Hadera ended his report that night: "Israelis and Palestinians are still living by that famous verse from Exodus, 'an eye for an eye.' Less well known, though, are the opening words of that verse, 'a life for a life.'"

In comparing Al Jazeera with Western news outlets, it is perilous to base definitive conclusions on the foregoing, anecdotal evidence. Still, these are snapshots of news coverage done by journalists of East and West having the deepest imaginable cultural differences, and catering, subtly or blatantly, to the biases of their discrete audiences. Al Jazeera is excoriated by some for pandering to the prejudices of its Arab-world viewers. American networks are regularly castigated for uncritical reporting on U.S. policy decisions, especially in wartime. Al Jazeera haters are implacable in their reaction to the network's benevolence toward Arab and Muslim geopolitical goals. Others are pleased that it's a powerful voice for what they see as the legitimate aspirations of Arab/Muslims, especially those in Palestine. That twain may never meet. ■

Neil Hickey is CJR's editor at large.

# PERSPECTIVES ON WAR

## Inside Al Jazeera

BY RICK ZEDNIK

Considering its influence, Al Jazeera's newsroom is puny. When Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak peeked in during a visit to Doha, Qatar, a couple of years ago, he asked, "All this noise comes from this *matchbox*?" Behind a glass wall at one end is the smallest of Al Jazeera's three broadcast studios, where anchors read five-minute newscasts every hour. On the opposite side of the room an illuminated map of the world, flanked by thirty-two television screens, serves as a backdrop for the newscasts. In between are forty-eight computer terminals.

It feels like an American newsroom at first, until you notice the details. While a few of the monitors are tuned to CNN, BBC, and AP Television News, most are set to stations from across the Arab world: Palestine, Iraq, Egypt, Abu Dhabi, Beirut-based Al Manar, and the Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC), soon to move from London to Dubai. Journalists bang away at keyboards with Arabic characters, which they read on their screens from right to left. Many of them wear khakis or Western business suits, but some men dress in traditional white *thoub*s and several women wear headscarves. Virtually all employees are Arab Muslims, although Al Jazeera's headquarters is a secular place. Employees who choose to pray during work hours do so in a tiny mosque behind the main building.

The journalists are a loose, sociable bunch, representing almost all twenty-two members of the Arab League. Moroccan producers, Syrian talk show hosts, Iraqi translators, Algerian fixers, Sudanese librarians, Palestinian secretaries, and Qatari executives all speak together in Arabic.

A few paces away from the newsroom is

the corner office of Mohamed Jassem Al Ali, Al Jazeera's managing director. Al Ali strides around his office, his *thoub* flowing and white *kaffiyeh* held on his head by black cords, pointing out some of the dozens of plaques, trophies, and framed certificates jamming the sill along two walls. He points to citations from the Netherlands, Germany, Lebanon, Egypt, and Russia, clearly proud of the honors his satellite network has garnered in barely five years.

But he is especially eager to explain the significance of one framed newspaper page: the cover of the *Times* of London from December 18, 1998, on which a color photo taken from a television broadcast fills most of the space above the fold. The photo shows a cruise missile exploding over Baghdad. More significant to Al Ali than the picture itself, however, is the logo in the screen's bottom right corner. There, partially obscured by the logo of CNN, is that of Al Jazeera — then barely two years old — which originally shot the pictures. That design, Arabic letters in the shape of a



flame or a teardrop, has become recognized across the Arab world as the symbol of a television network that stirs more emotions than any news medium the region has ever seen.

### WIDE OPEN

Al Jazeera, which translates as "the Peninsula," was established by emiri decree in February 1996. Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, who seized power in 1995 from his father, created Al Jazeera as part of an effort to modernize and democratize Qatar. He allocated \$137 million to Al Jazeera with the goal that the station would be self-sustaining within five years of its November 1, 1996, debut.

It has grown rapidly, expanding from its original six hours a day to twelve and then, on January 1, 1999, to twenty-four hours. It employs 500 people, including seventy journalists. Among its twenty-seven bureaus are offices in Washington, New York, London, Paris, Brussels, Moscow, Djakarta, and Islamabad.

**NEWS CENTER:** Once the war began, Al Jazeera's journalists were in the spotlight.



Al Jazeera is the only twenty-four-hour Arab news station. In addition to its fast-moving, video-heavy newscasts, it has built an audience through its talk shows, which probe political, social, and religious issues previously untouched by Arab media. Perhaps the most popular program is *The Opposite Direction*, hosted by Faisal Al Qasim, a British-educated Syrian who has a talent for drawing out guests with opposing views and goading them to mix it up on air. He has pitted an Egyptian supporting normalization of relations with Israel against another Egyptian who quoted anti-Semitic writings. A woman opposed to the abolition of polygamy walked off the set, fed up with her counterpart's insistence that it was an anachronistic practice.

Allowing guests to speak freely was radical enough, but then Al Qasim introduced viewer call-ins. Al Jazeera's microphone was not just open, but wide open. Some of his shows have become such shouting matches that some viewers are convinced Al Qasim filters out the moderate voices in favor of extreme ones. Another popular program is *Islamic Law and Life*, in which the host, Yusif Al Qardhawi, a professor of Islam at the University of Qatar, has discussed sensitive topics, such as female circumcision and rules that forbid women to work.

The U.S., meanwhile, was introduced to Al Jazeera in the days following the September terrorist attacks. And some here didn't like what they saw.

The Taliban quickly forced all foreign journalists to leave Kabul, allowing only Al Jazeera, which had a history of covering Afghanistan, to stay. When the U.S. launched strikes on Afghanistan on October 7, the world wanted what only Al Jazeera had: war video, including live footage of bombs falling on Kabul. And soon the network aired something even more jolting. In a tape that Al Jazeera staffers say was probably recorded about two weeks after September 11 and delivered via many Taliban hands to their Kabul bureau once U.S. airstrikes began, Osama bin Laden denounced the U.S.

Suddenly, Al Jazeera was not only delivering the news to its thirty-five million viewers, including 150,000 in the U.S., it was telling the world's top story to billions of people around the planet via international media that had little choice



**SPLIT DECISION:** Mohamed Al Ali ran bin Laden's tapes, but not an interview with him.

but to use Al Jazeera's pictures. It was not simply covering the war; it became an important player in the global battle for public opinion. Al Jazeera also rebroadcast portions of the ninety-minute interview with bin Laden it had aired in June 1999. In that program, the al Qaeda leader said he had "high regard and respect" for the people who bombed U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia in 1995 and 1996. Americans "violate our land and occupy it and steal the Muslims' possessions," he declared, "and when faced with resistance by Muslims they call it terrorism."

Al Jazeera's programming irked the United States so much that Colin Powell expressed concern about its inflammatory rhetoric to the Qatari emir during their October 3 meeting. Six weeks later, on November 13, a pair of 500-pound U.S. bombs destroyed Al Jazeera's Kabul bureau.

In early December, Al Ali received a letter from Victoria Clarke, assistant secretary of defense, asserting that the U.S. did not know the facility was used by Al Jazeera. "Whether it was targeted or not, I can't answer," Al Ali says, slowly rotating his worry beads. "But I can say for 100 percent that the United States knew about the office. Everyone knew we had an office in Kabul. It was very easy to find." On January 31, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists formally asked the Department of Defense for an explanation of the bombing.

## 'ARE WE A MOUTHPIECE?'

The U.S. government has not been the only American voice critical of Al Jazeera. A particularly scathing cover story, by Fouad Ajami, a professor of Middle East Studies at Johns Hopkins, ran in the November 18 *New York Times Magazine*. Ajami's piece was based on his viewing of the station's news and talk programming in October, not long after U.S. air strikes on Afghanistan began. He argued that the station had made bin Laden its "star." "One clip juxtaposes a scowling George Bush with a poised, almost dreamy bin Laden," Ajami writes. "Between them is an image of the World Trade Center engulfed in flame." Ajami asserted that "in its rough outlines, the message of Al Jazeera is similar to that of the Taliban: there is a huge technological imbalance between the antagonists, but the foreign power will nonetheless come to grief," and he accused the station of "mimicking Western norms of journalistic fairness while pandering to pan-Arabic sentiments." He cited an October 30 report by Al Jazeera's main man in Kabul, Tayseer Allouni, about which Ajami wrote:

As Allouni presented it there appeared to be nobody in Kabul who supported America's campaign to unseat the Taliban. A man in a telephone booth, wearing a traditional white cap, offered a



scripted-sounding lament that even Kabul's telephone lines had been destroyed. "We have lost so much," he said, "because of the American bombing." Allouni then closed his survey with gruesome images of wounded Afghans. The camera zoomed in on an old man lying on his back, his beard crusted with blood; this was followed by the image of a heavily bandaged child who looked propped up, as if to face the camera. The parting shot was an awful close-up of a wounded child's face.

The *Washington Post*, two weeks later, ran a thinner but also critical piece. Sharon Waxman quoted Jamal Khashoggi, a prominent Saudi Arabian journalist. "They are being led by the masses, they don't lead the masses," he said of Al Jazeera. "They know the taste of the Arab street, and the Arab street is anti-American. They are just like the *New York Post*. This is not very good."

Al Jazeera's journalists do not seem particularly worried about this or any criticism, but they do say that critics frequently confuse the network with the newsmakers and talk-show guests that appear on it. "Are we a mouthpiece for bin Laden?" says Dana Suwaygh, an Al Jazeera news producer who was educated in Canada. "Maybe, but that would make us Bush's mouthpiece as well. He gets more airtime, actually."

Hafiz al-Mirazi, Al Jazeera's Washington bureau chief, sounds weary when asked about accusations of bias. "The network is much more balanced than it gets credit for," he says. "During this crisis we have been criticized for making Al Jazeera a mouthpiece for the U.S. government. Why? Almost on a daily basis we bring on spokespersons for the administration."

Al Ali points out that Al Jazeera provides Arab news from an Arab perspective, with journalists who hail from Mauritania to Iraq — no single nation dominates — and that it has bureaus in almost all Arab countries, including one in the Palestinian West Bank.

The question of what an Arab perspective means comes to the fore in coverage of the struggle between the Israelis and the Palestinians, Al Jazeera's top story before September 11. No other issue so rouses or unites Arabs.

Viewers across the Arab world have followed correspondent Walid Al Omari's reports from Ramallah, as he has chronicled the Palestinian uprising since it began in late 2000. They've seen more blood, more burned and mutilated

"They are being led by the masses, they don't lead the masses. They know the taste of the Arab street, and the Arab street is anti-American."

corpses than have viewers of CNN. Al Omari tends to refer to Palestinians killed by Israeli soldiers in this bitter conflict as "martyrs," as he conceded to *60 Minutes*, but to Israelis killed by Palestinians as just that — "the Israeli is killed by Palestinians." When news breaks, it's not long before Palestinian sources are on the air. By 7:03 on the morning of January 19, 2002, for example, Al Omari was interviewing the director of the Voice of Palestine, whose headquarters had been blown up by Israeli forces before dawn.

In our interview, Al Ali used the previous night's news to illustrate his desire to achieve balance. "Israeli Prime Minister [Ariel] Sharon had a press conference about the ship carrying weapons," Al Ali says, referring to Israel's January 3 capture of a ship smuggling munitions. "He said the vessel is bringing arms to the Palestinian Authority. We covered this press conference. At the same time, we expect to hear from the Palestinian Authority. When they hold an event, we will cover it. It doesn't mean we are supporting Sharon or the Palestinian Authority."

In four days of viewing of Al Jazeera's hourlong news roundup, *Al Hasad*, or *The Harvest*, in mid-January, the primacy of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was clear. It was the lead story almost every night. And in its reporting from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the show featured only one brief interview with an Israeli spokesman. In reporting on the assassination of a young militant leader in the West Bank by the Israelis that week, there was no effort to provide the context for Israelis. Questions from anchors and reporters, meanwhile, sometimes betrayed clear sympathies. On January 15, Jumana Namour interviewed Mohammed Dahlan, a high-ranking security chief for the Palestinians from the Gaza Strip:

Q. Before September 11, you were viewed as resistance fighters. After September 11 it is as if the right to resistance was taken away.

A. After September 11, we, who were victims in the eyes of the world, became the terrorist Palestinian Authority.

Still, the station did go twice to Washington to talk to U.S. experts on the Middle East, who offered points of view clearly at odds with the Palestinians.

Indeed, as the State Department was pressuring Al Jazeera to limit anti-American content, it was offering the station its own officials for interviews. Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld, and Condoleezza Rice all appeared on Al Jazeera, as did Christopher Ross, a former American ambassador to Syria who speaks fluent Arabic. The Americans were not alone. British Prime Minister Tony Blair also made his case for "dis-mantling the network of international terrorism" directly to Al Jazeera viewers.

## 'I WANT MY AL JAZEERA'

If American officials were to claim that Al Jazeera is against them, their Middle Eastern counterparts likely would reply, "Join the club." According to Yousef Al Shouly, a Palestinian senior producer for Al Jazeera, Western leaders are now absorbing the lesson that Arab heads of state learned over the past five years: "Use Al Jazeera to spread your views; use Al Jazeera to your own benefit." When there is controversy in a country, he says, his station allows both "the government and the opposition to give their point of view. Al Jazeera gives both sides a chance. Al Jazeera has not changed its policy. Governments have changed their policy" to adapt to the network, he says.

Before Al Jazeera began broadcasting in 1996, Arab leaders were accustomed to state-owned media that did not question the status quo. In the choice between pleasing governments or pleasing viewers, Al Jazeera chose the latter.

There's hardly an Arab government that the station has not offended. Al Jazeera staff say the Qatari foreign ministry has received more than 400 complaints. When the network aired a program probing Algeria's civil war, the government in Algiers cut the signal. Nadia Tabib, an Al Jazeera employee, says Algerians soon flooded phone lines with cries of "I want my Al Jazeera!"

Egypt's state media ran a campaign against Al Jazeera's "yellow programs,"



denouncing the station's "sinister salad of sex, religion and politics" topped with "sensationalist seasoning." Yasir Arafat was reportedly incensed by Al Jazeera's frequent interviews with the Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. And the network upset Palestinian authorities with a preview for a March 2001 documentary that explored the role of Palestinian guerillas as players in Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war. Security personnel entered the Palestine bureau and demanded that images insulting to Arafat be removed. Al Jazeera refused, and continued to air the footage.

Saudi Arabia bars Al Jazeera from its territory, except to cover special events like the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Jordan temporarily closed Al Jazeera's bureau there after a guest on a debate program criticized the regime in Amman. Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya recalled their ambassadors from Doha in protest of Al Jazeera coverage, reinstating them once their point was made.

As a result of all this, Al Jazeera is an inhospitable place for advertisers who dislike divisive issues. The ad business tends to be more political in the Middle East than in more democratic parts of the world. Regional companies and multinationals alike avoid ruffling the feathers of their host governments.

Al Ali says Saudi Arabian companies have tried to influence Al Jazeera's coverage by cutting ad budgets for the station or threatening to do so. The tactic has had no effect, Al Ali says. "We would lose our credibility with the audience." PepsiCo and General Electric recently canceled advertising campaigns on Al Jazeera worth a combined \$3 million, according to Al Ali. GE did not return requests for comment; PepsiCo says it has not regularly advertised on Al Jazeera.

Despite its ranking as the region's most-viewed news network and second-most-watched pan-Arab station, Al Jazeera generated only \$15 million in ad revenue in 2000. In contrast, the Middle East Broadcasting Centre garnered \$76 million in ad revenue in 1998, while Lebanon's entertainment network, LBC — the region's most-watched — took in about \$93 million, according to the Pan Arab Research Centre in Dubai.

Al Ali says that while other Arab stations earn about 90 percent of their revenue from advertising, commercials account for only about 40 percent of Al Jazeera's revenues. The rest comes from renting out equipment, selling program-

'Are we a mouthpiece for bin Laden? Maybe, but that would make us Bush's mouthpiece as well. He gets more airtime, actually.'

ming and videotapes, and cable subscription fees. The station now operates, he says, without government subsidies.

Al Jazeera says it was teetering on the edge of breaking even as its fifth anniversary deadline approached. Then came September 11. The war has been good to it. "Because we were alone in Afghanistan at that time, we made a lot of money from selling pictures, hiring out facilities," Al Ali says.

CNN forged an affiliation with Al Jazeera in the weeks following September 11. ABC News, the BBC, and the German market leader ZDF also have signed contracts with the network in recent months.

Al Jazeera is expanding into the UK, as well as into Indonesia and Malaysia — a market with 220 million Muslims. In November, the Malaysian pay-TV operator Astro began showing Al Jazeera, translated into Malay, for six hours a day.

**P**erhaps the most intriguing opportunities Al Ali is exploring involve launching new Arabic-language networks. He says he is close to a deal that would create a business news channel in cooperation with CNBC and may produce a documentary channel along the lines of National Geographic or Discovery. At a January 28 press conference marking the first anniversary of the station's Web site, [aljazeera.net](http://aljazeera.net), station officials said they are considering launching a corresponding site in English.

One of Al Jazeera's profitable revenue streams lately has been its exclusive videos of Osama bin Laden. Three-minute clips of bin Laden have reportedly fetched the station as much as \$250,000 apiece. But bin Laden tapes, it appears, can be a double-edged sword.

On January 31, CNN aired a previously unseen interview with bin Laden. It had been conducted by an Al Jazeera correspondent on October 21, two weeks after

the bombs began falling on Afghanistan and some three weeks before the fall of Kabul. Al Jazeera had not aired the interview on the ground that it was not newsworthy. The tape reportedly had been circulating in intelligence circles, and had been quoted, though not identified, by British Prime Minister Tony Blair last November. CNN, which said it obtained the tape from "a nongovernmental source," found the interview newsworthy indeed. In it bin Laden first denies "carrying out" the September 11 attacks, but Al Jazeera's reporter presses him. "If inciting people to do that is terrorism and if killing those who kill our sons is terrorism," bin Laden says, "then let history be witness that we are terrorists." And he adds later, "I say it's permissible in Islamic law and logic."

CNN says its agreement with Al Jazeera gave it a right to broadcast the tape, but a furious Al Ali said the network would sever its partnership with CNN. "Al Jazeera would have expected CNN to ... respect its special relationship with Al Jazeera by not airing material that Al Jazeera itself chose not to broadcast."

Al Ali has declined to discuss the reasons that the network did not run the interview.

Joshua Micah Marshall, a senior correspondent for *The American Prospect*, theorized (without evidence) in *Salon* on February 2 that the network buried the interview because "it was too unfavorable to bin Laden" at a time when the Arab world was not convinced of his guilt.

On the other hand, the interview came not long after Vice President Dick Cheney met with the emir of Qatar to complain about the broadcasts, and at a time of ferocious Western criticism of the network for broadcasting the October 7 bin Laden tapes that had been supplied to it. An anonymous Al Jazeera journalist told Reuters that the bin Laden interview had been ditched for such reasons. "We decided, under the circumstances at that time, that airing the interview would have strengthened the belief that we are a mouthpiece for bin Laden." Which, if true, must have been an awkward decision for a network that prides itself on standing up to everybody. ■

*Rick Zednik is a free-lance journalist living in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He recently spent twelve days in Qatar. In 1995 he co-founded The Slovak Spectator, which remains the only English-language newspaper in Slovakia. Stephen Franklin of the Chicago Tribune provided some tape translation and analysis.*

# PERSPECTIVES ON WAR

## The British See Things Differently

BY GEORGE KENNEDY

British newspapers responded to the attacks of September 11 just as American papers did: saturation coverage and outrage. But it didn't take long before reporting and commentary in Britain revealed essential differences between journalism in the U.K. and the U.S. — differences in style and substance as well as in the trans-Atlantic perspective.

On September 12, Britain's famously competitive national press spoke with one voice, with full-page photographs of the collapsing World Trade Center towers on nearly every front page. *The Sunday Times* of September 16 included a twenty-four-page ad-free section headlined AMERICA AT WAR.

The *Guardian's* media critic, Roy Greenslade, was struck by the rare unanimity. "What was so notable about all the coverage was the way in which British newspapers treated the United States as 'one of us,'" he wrote in his review a week later.

Coverage has continued to be exhaustive. The *Times* has had as many as ten reporters in and around Afghanistan; the *Guardian* and its Sunday sister, the *Observer*, share six; the *Mirror*, up to fourteen in Asia and America. On a Thursday in mid-October, the *Guardian* had sixteen pages of coverage, the *Times* and the *Mirror* fifteen, the *Sun* and *Daily Mail* nine each. Most of that coverage was staff-written, though it's hard to be precise because British papers typically use wire service material without attribution.

Neither the unanimity nor the unquestioning support lasted long, however. By November, Prime Minister Blair's director of communications, Alastair Campbell, was complaining of the "corrosive negativity" of Britain's liberal media, which traditionally are friendly to the Labour government. While Britain's leaders provided unswerving support for the war on terrorism, the press in Britain quickly as-



serted its independence. Observers on both sides of the Atlantic noted differences in tone and content between the British and American press. As an American living in London from September to December, I was one of those observers.

### 'IT JUST DIDN'T HAPPEN'

Reporting on civilian deaths is one area of difference. In the twentieth paragraph of a December 5 *New York Times* story from Tora Bora, for example, John Kifner and Tim Weiner relayed reports that some bombs had gone astray: "The bombing, which the United States aimed at Al Qaeda command and control centers, also hit civilian targets, villagers and independent witnesses said."

Richard Lloyd Parry, correspondent for *The Independent* of London, addressed the same topic. On December 4, his first-person report ran in the top right-hand corner of the paper's front page. Detailed in observation, bitterly sarcastic in tone, his piece reacted to the claim by an American spokesman that nothing untoward had happened:

The village where nothing happened is reached by a steep climb at the end of a rattling three-hour drive along a stony road. Until nothing happened here, early on the morning of Saturday and again the following day, it was a large village with a small graveyard, but now that has been reversed. The cemetery on the hill contains 40 freshly dug graves, unmarked and identical. And the village of Kama Ado has ceased to exist.

Many of the homes here are just deep conical craters in the earth. The rest are cracked open, split like crushed cardboard boxes. At the moment when nothing happened, the villagers of Kama Ado were taking their early morning meal, before sunrise and the beginning of the Ramadan fast. And there in the rubble, dented and ripped, are tokens of the simple daily lives they led.

A contorted tin kettle, turned almost inside out by the blast; a collection of charred cooking pots; and the fragments of an old-fashioned pedal-operated sewing machine. A split metal chest contains scraps of children's clothes in cheap bright nylon.

In another room are the only riches that these people had, six dead cows lying higgledy-piggledy and distended by decay. And all this is very strange be-

An Anti-Taliban Commander Says bin Laden's Top Aide Is Dead

Monday, after the American bombing of villages along the way. The aimed at Al Qaeda command and control centers, also hit civilian targets, villagers and independent witnesses said.

Since the fall of the Taliban, the



A Taliban Defector Tells a Tale of Espionage: Tall or Truly Daring?

**PLAY:** When a December report surfaced about civilians killed, *The New York Times* (above) buried it. *The Independent* (right) investigated and ran it on page one.

cause, on Saturday morning — when American B-52s unloaded dozens of bombs that killed 115 men, women and children — nothing happened.

We know this because the U.S. Department of Defence told us so. That evening, a Pentagon spokesman, questioned about reports of civilian casualties in eastern Afghanistan, explained that they were not true, because the U.S. is meticulous in selecting only military targets associated with Osama bin Laden's al-Qa'ida network. Subsequent Pentagon utterances on the subject have wobbled somewhat, but there has been no retraction of that initial decisive statement: "It just didn't happen."

Three weeks later, on December 22, based on reports from tribal leaders, *Independent* correspondents Andrew Gumbel and Kim Sengupta filed from Kabul this lead: "American warplanes have destroyed a convoy of vehicles, killing at least fifteen people, in what was claimed to be a disastrous attack on a party of tribal elders traveling to today's inauguration of the new Afghan government." The page-one headline: CAMPAIGN AGAINST TERRORISM: US AIRSTRIKE 'KILLS ALLIES OF NEW KABUL GOVERNMENT.'

The *New York Times* account on the same day, in the third paragraph of a dispatch by Amy Waldman from Kabul, had another perspective: "While an Afghan Islamic Press report said that tribal elders on their way to Kabul were in the vehicles, the

Defense Department expressed certainty tonight that the AC-130 gunships and

Navy jets had found their desired targets: Taliban fleeing a compound that also was attacked."

The facts remained elusive for weeks. In early February, *The Washington Post* quoted Afghanistan's new leader, Hamid Karzai, as saying that U.S. authorities had admitted to him that they had indeed killed innocent people in the convoy. Karzai said U.S. forces had been purposely misled into believing the convoy included Taliban officials. Up to sixty-five people were reported to have been killed in the raid.

Those two samples reflect aspects of the broad differences between not just these correspondents, but British and American print journalism. Peter Preston, who has edited both the *Guardian* and the *Observer*, points out that the two nations' newspapers are "far apart in their basic impulses." Those impulses arise from geography, tradition, and competition.

## 'ARTIFICIAL BALANCE'

Geography dictates, first, that the British press, like its government and economy, is centralized in London, with the entire nation within easy reach by road and rail. Ten national newspapers are published within a few miles of each other, though none is any longer actually on Fleet Street, which gave the British press its nickname. Geography also has forced Britain and its journalists to pay far closer attention to the outside world than most Americans, or most American journalists, usually do. This international experience has produced a number of reporters of great experience and sophistication in foreign coverage.

The tradition of the British press is, in the words of George Brock, managing editor of the *Times*, one of "partisanship and polemical writing." Objectivity, as it is generally understood by American journalists, is not a core value for the British. "We will encourage writers to be opinionated within limits — analytical and interesting — but only inside the guideline that they write what they know to be the truth to the best of their belief,"

Robert Fisk: This conflict is the last colonial war  
David Aaronovitch: Hamas want victory, not peace

## THE INDEPENDENT

Israel attacks Arafat's base in its own 'war on terrorism'



A village is destroyed. And America says nothing happened

British pupils score high marks in global league table

said Brock. "That falls well short of any encouragement or incentive to bend the truth as they see it. We think that intelligent readers understand that an artificial requirement for 'balance' hampers, rather than promotes, understanding."

Like many British journalists, Brock regards most American papers as boring. In the fiercely competitive world of the British national press, dullness is a cardinal sin. While most American papers enjoy something close to local monopolies, ten London dailies fight for about 13 million readers on thousands of newsstands.

Broadly, the papers divide along lines of class and ideology. The mass circulation tabloids — most notably the Rupert Murdoch-owned *Sun* (circulation 3.4 million) and the *Mirror* (circulation 2.2 million), owned by Trinity Mirror — have little overlap of readership with the broadsheets. The *Sun* is conservative and strongly nationalistic. The *Mirror*, equally working-class in its appeal, traditionally supports Labour governments.

Colin Harrow, managing editor of the *Mirror*, is used to Americans who equate tabloid journalism with *The National Enquirer* and similar supermarket titles. A bit defensively, he begins a conversation, "The *Mirror* is a newspaper, not a celebrity scandal sheet." Though admitting that his paper shows its share of celebrity faces — if not as many other body parts as the *Sun* famously displays on its page three — he provides a definition of the tabloid's role: "We are there to say to an audience that doesn't have



The *Independent* has been more consistently critical of the war than any of its competitors, but it has not been alone. In both coverage and comment, the broadsheet *Guardian* and the tabloid *Mirror* have questioned American and British policies. Even generally supportive publications, such as the *Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, and Pearson's weekly *Economist*, which has a U.S. circulation of 235,000, have published sharper criticism than readers of the American press are accustomed to seeing. (In the U.S., a review of post-9/11 coverage in selected outlets by the Project for Excellence in Journalism found that from September through December the percentage of stories that could be perceived as dissenting from the administration's point of view never exceeded 10 percent.) This critical stance in Britain includes not

## AP MINDGARDEN/ALISA BALICH



ed, "We can't remember what award we gave to Anthony Loyd of the *Times* for his purple prose from Afghanistan, but he's got to give it back. His colleague, Oliver August, wins hands down . . .")

## 'UNABLE TO CONFIRM'

In intellectual circles, meanwhile, the ideological jousting drew blood. The October 4 edition of the *London Review of Books* published a collection of short essays reflecting on the attacks. They included one bombshell by the Cambridge University historian Mary Beard, who commented that "when the shock had faded, more hard-headed reaction set in. This wasn't just the feeling that, however tactfully you dress it up, the United States had it coming. That is, of course, what many people openly or privately think. World bullies, even if their heart is in the right place, will in the end pay the price."

The response was immediate. An American academic, Marjorie Perloff, wrote from California: "I hereby cancel my subscription and shall urge my Stanford students and colleagues to boycott the journal." Two months later, the letters pages of the *Review* continued to resound with argument and name-calling and, in at least one case, the withdrawal of a promised review. This division among academics mirrored a broader division in public opinion. While polls continue to show wide British support for America, the war itself was less popular.

Sensitivities about America were in such a state by the end of January that Hugo Young felt compelled to start a column in the *Guardian*—a piece critical of President Bush's State of the Union address and the U.S.'s current with-us-or-against-us mood—this way:

This will sound to some people like an anti-American column. It is not . . . I am not anti-American in any of the conditioning senses the epithet usually signifies: ethnically hostile, corporately obsessed, economically resentful, chanting every night the well-known litany of Washington's postwar dirty deeds . . .

Andrew Anthony, writing in *The Observer* on November 18 about the war of opinion, argued that at least "there is room in the British press for a range of opinions."

American media watchers, including Howard Kurtz of *The Washington Post* and Eric Alterman of *The Nation*, have made similar points. The *Guardian's* Roy Greenslade, on a visit to the States, commented on the "easy ride" being

given President Bush and contrasted that to the vigorous poking and prodding to which the British press subjects the prime minister and his cabinet.

Yet if the American press could be faulted for a shortage of critical coverage, it also has managed to avoid some spectacular gaffes to which the British seem prone. Even British journalists concede that the dark side of their emphasis on speed and exclusivity is the persistent problem of inaccuracy. Indeed, that problem is so great that The Associated Press is particularly hesitant to pick up material from the national newspapers unless it can be independently confirmed.

One highly visible example: The *Times* reported at the top of page one on December 8, "Mullah Muhammad Omar was last night being held captive as the Taliban lost control of their spiritual stronghold Kandahar in a major breakthrough for the American-led coalition." The *New York Times*, on the other hand, acknowledged that report but added that the American military was "unable to confirm" it. Nor could anyone else. ■

George Kennedy is a professor of journalism at the University of Missouri. He spent the fall in London supervising students in the university's semester-abroad program.

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# Network Anchors See A Diminished World

## *Nightly News Loses Viewers and Substance*



Robert G. Kaiser

This article is excerpted from a new book, *The News About the News: American Journalism in Peril* (Knopf), by Leonard Downie Jr. and Robert G. Kaiser. Downie has been executive editor of *The Washington Post* since 1992, succeeding Ben Bradlee. Kaiser was managing editor from 1991 to 1998 and now is an associate editor.



Leonard Downie Jr.

**“T**his is truly amazing,” said Dan Rather, staring at a youthful version of himself reading brief news items into the camera. Rather was sitting in his cozy, windowless office just off the main CBS newsroom on West Fifty-seventh Street in New York, from which he broadcasts the *CBS Evening News*. The room was dark and comfortably furnished; an aromatic candle burned on a side table. With rapt attention, Rather watched himself delivering the news of March 25, 1981, nearly twenty years earlier. What amazed him was the number of brief news items — eight in all, each of ten to fifty seconds in length — that he simply read facing the camera, without fancy graphics or any other diversion. This, said Rather, would never happen today.

His surprise had begun with the first items on the old broadcast, an eighty-second report from San Salvador, where the American embassy had been attacked by terrorists, and a four-minute, forty-second story from Washington about a power struggle in the new Reagan administration involving the secretary of state, Alexander M. Haig. Later a correspondent gave a



AP/WIDEWORLD/FRANCESCO DOMENICO

### DAN RATHER

**‘The key point is that no one said [in 1981] it costs too much and we can’t afford it’**

two-and-a-half-minute report from Poland. “No one among the big three [networks] would run this long at the top [the beginning of the show] with these kinds of stories” now, Rather said. Nor would there be so much foreign news. If he tried to do a similar newscast now, Rather said, CBS executives would tell him, “Dan, you cannot lead with El Salvador and take the broadcast through an inside Washington power struggle and go to a piece about Poland . . . There was a time when you could do that, 1981 was the time. But if you do it today, you die, and we die.”

The three network news shows together still attract a bigger audience each evening than any other regularly scheduled program on television. And when a big story breaks, Americans still turn to

Rather, Tom Brokaw on NBC, and Peter Jennings on ABC, who have been our national masters of ceremonies since the early eighties. After terrorists flew jetliners into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, most American adults turned to the three major networks to follow the story. There was no measurement of the daytime television audience on September 11, 2001, but that night, at least 80 million Americans were watching ABC, CBS or NBC throughout prime time (8-11 P.M.). Before the terrorist attacks, 20-25 million people watched the three evening news shows each night.

But their longevity and the size of their collective audience disguises the fact that all three networks, and their nightly newscasts, have survived tumultuous

## DAN RATHER

March 25, 1981

*Surprise! Foreign news*



changes during the past two decades. The three newscasts actually lost about 40 percent of their audience between 1981 and 2001. This remarkable decline reflects increasing competition for viewers as the television universe was transformed by cable, satellite services, and the Internet, giving Americans scores of alternatives to the three broadcast networks. Viewers were also lost to new lifestyles and changing tastes. Under new economic pressures, the networks themselves have been reconstituted: all three have gone through wrenching ownership changes since 1985; ABC and CBS have had two of them. New owners transformed the status of network news.

To explore the fundamental ways network news has changed, we asked all three anchor men to look at tapes of their broadcasts from the first month that each of them sat in the anchor's chair. Then, in the spring of 2000, we asked them to explain what had happened in the years since.

When the tape of the March 25, 1981, *CBS Evening News* broadcast ended, Rather explained how he had altered his approach to the news. Like the other two anchors, Rather is a senior editor of his broadcast as well as its lead performer. He and his executive producer collaborate in deciding the program's content, subject to guidance from CBS News executives.

"I want to go home at night saying, 'Well, we had in the broadcast at least a mention of those things we consider to be the most important and the most interesting of the day,'" Rather said. Some days what's most interesting was also most important, so it was easy to decide what the main story was. But "there are other days when the most interesting things are not the most important, or, indeed, one may question whether they are important at all." For example, "We do have more celebrity news in the broadcast than I would like to have."

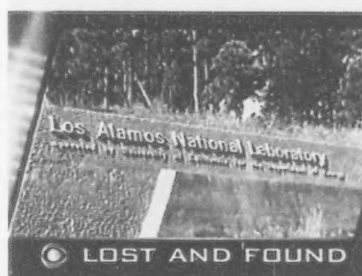
Rather's preference is for strongly presented stories on serious subjects from overseas and from Washington. In 1981 such stories provided the meat, potatoes, and often the gravy for the *CBS Evening News*. The 1981 newscast contained, after commercials, twenty-three minutes, twenty seconds of news; of that, nearly seventeen minutes was devoted to stories from Washington or overseas.

In 1981, Rather said, when confronted with a story like the civil war in El Salvador, "We wanted at least two correspondents assigned there with at least

## DAN RATHER

June 16, 2000

*Faster-paced and shorter*



two camera crews and at least two producers. The key point is that nobody said, 'Well, it costs too much and we can't afford that.' Those decisions were made on the basis of, 'Is it important? Is it interesting? That's changed quite a bit.'

By 2000, foreign stories rarely got one CBS crew, let alone two. The once-vast network of CBS correspondents and bureaus around the world was a small fraction of that. If Rather tried to cover more foreign news in 2000, he said, his bosses might point out that NBC had the most popular evening news show, and "they do the least" foreign news. And of course, "it's the most expensive; international news costs more than the others."

The 1981 broadcast also included a five-and-a-half-minute report on two toxic dumps near Buffalo, New York — the famous one at Love Canal and another one nearby. A correspondent introduced a cast of worried local residents, a reassuring executive of the company whose hazardous chemicals went into the dumps, local officials, and more. "A piece like this is as close as we could come to a mini-documentary," Rather said as he watched. "Today we rarely do something four and a half minutes — maybe twice a year . . . and there would be a lot of discussion whether we should do it at all."

The new approach emphasized shorter pieces, softer stories, less reporting from Washington and abroad. "I myself remain unconvinced" that viewers actually preferred this diet to harder coverage, Rather said. But he also acknowledged the limits of his ability to win these arguments. When we asked him who at CBS had the ultimate power to make the important decisions, he replied, "They're all on the corporate side."

We watched the 2000 version of Rather's *CBS Evening News* on the night of our interview with him — June 16 — to see how it compared with the 1981 broadcast, and how it reflected the new realities he had discussed with us. The 2000 broadcast was faster-paced and shorter. The longest story took up two and a half minutes. The show still filled half an hour, but the time actually devoted to the news had fallen from 23:20 in 1981 to 18:20 in 2000. More than ten minutes was devoted to commercials, and Rather spent eighty seconds on "teases" — brief previews of what was still to come on the program to persuade viewers to stick with CBS through its four commercial breaks, each lasting two minutes or more.

The lead story was hard news: author-

ities had found two computer hard drives containing sensitive nuclear secrets that had been "lost" at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. Next came an "exclusive CBS News report" on Osama bin Laden, the Saudi terrorist, from Jim Stewart, CBS's Justice Department correspondent in Washington.

This story demonstrated how television has moved away from classical definitions of news. It conveyed a smidgen of information, and a lot of ominous implication. Stewart began this way: "If you thought Osama bin Laden's terrorist activities were limited to the Middle East, then consider the plight of these twenty-one foreign tourists entering their third month of captivity in the Philippine jungle." He showed a grim snippet of videotape depicting weeping hostages, one of whom says, "We are finished . . . We-we-we cannot face this anymore."

This reference to the hostages in the Philippines provided a reason to use that bit of gruesome videotape. And it created a bridge to the real subject of the story, anxieties about terrorism at the Olympic Games in Sydney.

We found much to wonder about in the two-minute, ten-second report, beginning with its opening line. Why would anyone think bin Laden's terrorism was "limited to the Middle East"? Bin Laden became notorious after allegedly organizing attacks on U.S. embassies in Africa, and American authorities suspected him of trying to organize incidents in the United States to welcome the year 2000. His scope of activity was never confined to the Mideast. So where was the news?

Stewart's report contained only one new fact: that the FBI had sent twelve agents to Australia. The idea that bin Laden might target the Olympics was not new, and Australian papers had earlier reported that the government there had asked for FBI assistance. The rest of this report consisted of vivid, ominous video, most of it not fully explained, accompanied by rather dark speculation.

It was followed by a two-minute report on rising gas prices. The other major stories in this broadcast were all features: drought in Minnesota (2:30); the potential benefits to heart-disease patients of folic acid (2:10); a flawed version of the new golden dollar coin that would be worth a lot of money (1:50); and the eighteenth birthday of Britain's Prince William (2:30) — the only story of the broadcast reported from overseas.

Only in one respect did this 2000







**TOM BROKAW**

**'We've got one crack, we've got to get them [the audience]; they've got to stay with us'**

newscast resemble its 1981 ancestor: Rather again read a great many brief news items into the camera. There were ten, every one illustrated with some kind of graphic. His goal to at least mention "those things we consider to be the most important and the most interesting of the day" was met, thanks to these ten brief items. The next day's *New York Times* and *Washington Post* had only one good story that Rather had missed. Israel that day had completed its withdrawal from south Lebanon after an occupation that had lasted twenty-two years. Rather noted every other major story covered in the next day's papers. Of course he gave just a headline for most of them, a reminder of how sketchy the television news is.

**T**om Brokaw revealed none of Rather's nostalgia when he watched the *NBC Nightly News* broadcast for September 23, 1983. Brokaw has made an easier adjustment to the new forms of network news. He talked less about the old days than Rather and offered a vigorous defense of the new version of the program.

The 1983 NBC broadcast resembled Rather's 1981 *CBS Evening News* in many respects. Brokaw in 1983 also began with a foreign story — from Beirut, where U.S. forces had intervened. A correspondent's report from the scene lasted nearly three minutes. The next story, also nearly three minutes long, described continuing demonstrations in the Philippines against the government of dictator Ferdinand Marcos. There followed two Washington stories, one on calls for the resignation of James Watt, President Reagan's Interior secretary, the other on President Reagan's courtship of Hispanic voters. All together, fourteen minutes and twenty seconds of that broadcast (which devoted twenty-two minutes, ten seconds to news) was spent on stories from Washington or overseas.

The program included three features,

stories not pegged to the day's events, with a human-interest angle. One, lasting not quite two minutes, reported on an attempt by employees of a West Virginia steel plant to buy the company before it went out of business. The story was confusing and incomplete, conveying no real sense of the workers' prospects for success. A second feature, two minutes long, was devoted to the "doomsday" jetliner that was supposed to carry the president away from a nuclear attack on the United States. The third, just over two minutes, reported on a reunion of now-elderly men who had worked in the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps. It was sentimental and easy to look at and contained no real information.

Brokaw watched all this in a conference room lined with promotional posters for top-rated NBC shows on the third floor of NBC headquarters in Rockefeller Center. The world, American society, and television had all changed since then, he said — "both quantitative and qualitative changes." In 1983 the news was dominated "by white middle-aged men" and subjects that interested them. Now his newscast is self-consciously diverse, often aimed at women, "because we know that women still are probably our most loyal viewer base."

In 1983 NBC could rely on the news of the day to fill the show. In 2000 it had to construct a program to appeal to viewers who, the producers assume, may already know the headlines of the day by the time they sit down to watch Brokaw. So NBC produced feature stories that could be broadcast whenever Brokaw and his producers decided such segments would help a particular program. "We know... beginning on a Monday about what we're going to have on that week in the back end of the broadcast," Brokaw said. "We try to almost do it thematically."

"Every feature that we do has a purpose, it's not just entertainment or because it's interesting," he said. "The features that we're doing we think have



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real application." Brokaw was critical of the features in the 1983 show because they were too thin and lacked purpose. The piece from West Virginia "shouldn't have been on . . . It had no context whatsoever."

Brokaw said some things have not changed. "We'd sure as hell be doing today" a big story equivalent to the Beirut and Manila stories of 1983 — "probably do more on them today than they did" then. But the news isn't always that compelling now, he said — a subjective judgment, certainly, that easily allows for the sharp reduction in foreign reports on the *NBC Nightly News*.

But Brokaw's philosophy of foreign news had changed. It wasn't necessary, or desirable, to track each developing story incremental step by incremental step. "What we try to do episodically is a two-and-a-half-minute piece that puts it in some context and wraps it up," he said. Such a report might contain 440 words, the length of a short newspaper story.

"I think our role still is to do as much as possible to give people at the end of the day a snapshot of their world," he added. But more than a snapshot, too — "value added" reporting on subjects of interest to viewers, he said, is now a regular part of the program. "More and more of it is in the medical and scientific field."

"Dan [Rather] is always complaining about the hard-news thing," Brokaw said. "Well, what does that mean? That's become a kind of mantra or a liturgy, if you will. And some hard news — so-called — has almost no meaning."

The challenge, Brokaw said, is to seize and hold an audience in this era of multiple channels and remote control devices. "We get one crack, we've got to get them, they've got to stay with us." In a simpler, less competitive era, the producers of the 1983 newscast "didn't have to worry about somebody going 'click.'"

To newspaper editors like us, one of the most striking aspects of a television news broadcast is the fact that any single item can turn off a viewer, sending him or her to another channel. Our readers can browse through the newspaper looking for items that catch their eye, skipping those that bore them. But television viewers have no such freedom: they are stuck with the sequence of items the producers decide to provide. They can't skip a story or skim through the program until they find something appealing. So every item on a broadcast carries the weight of the entire program. One false step and you've lost a viewer, or a million of them.

So how does NBC try to grab and hold an audience? We watched the *Nightly News* the evening we had talked to Brokaw, May 18, 2000. The show began in a wall of flame on NBC's futuristic set; the flames were from forest fires in New Mexico. Brokaw stood, full length, beside the crackling, flame-orange and smoke-gray conflagration. "It was a government blunder of colossal proportions," he began. "And the financial and emotional price tags still are being calculated. The wildfires in New Mexico, which are still burning tonight, began as a deliberate policy of the National Park Service. Today the government acknowledged the complete failure of the plan."

A correspondent then recounted the day's news against a backdrop of more footage from the fires, pictures of raging fires and destroyed homes. His report lasted nearly three minutes.

Next came a weather story from the Midwest, which apparently earned its place in the broadcast because NBC had acquired an extraordinary home video of a tornado crossing the Nebraska plain. For more than two minutes viewers saw the giant, spinning funnel of a classic tornado speeding across farm fields, occasionally setting off a lightning-like flash when it tore through electrical wires. The impact of the twister? The correspondent reported, "One house destroyed, major damage to two more. Several farm buildings ruined as well. But miraculously, no one seriously injured."

Great video, but no real news.

Next came two and a half minutes from Washington on maneuvering over legislation on U.S. trade with China, a straightforward account that showed viewers a range of opinions on the issue.

Most evenings the Brokaw broadcast included a segment called "NBC News in Depth." On this broadcast it was devoted to more on the New Mexico fires — specifically the difficulty owners of destroyed homes will face when trying to collect damages from the federal government.

The longest piece in the broadcast, three and a half minutes, was a feature called "Best Medicine." This one described the Cleveland Clinic, a leading center treating heart disease. The clinic gave NBC correspondent Robert Bazell and his camera crew access to the operating room while open-heart surgery was under way, which produced marvelous footage. But there was little real information in this story.

NBC had decided that medical features add to the appeal of its broadcast.





PETER JENNINGS

**'Our mission is to try to stay with the major national and international stories of the day'**

Brokaw's *Nightly News* often included two of them. On this occasion, the second was about the fate of chimpanzees used in medical experiments. "They really are our next of kin," began a correspondent. And they can live to age fifty, "at a cost of several hundred thousand dollars apiece." How should we take care of them? The correspondent reported conflicting views on this subject, concluding: "Eventually, Congress will have to resolve" the question.

All together Brokaw covered seven news stories in nineteen minutes of news, mostly with brief headlines. There was one story from Washington (China trade), which lasted two and a half minutes. The only foreign news in the broadcast was a twenty-second "read"—Brokaw announcing Pope John Paul II's eightieth birthday. Five other pieces lasted more than two minutes: three on fires and weather, and the two medical pieces.

NBC chose not to report these stories that were covered in the next day's *New York Times* and *Washington Post*: The Senate's close vote against a provision that would have forced an early U.S. withdrawal from Kosovo; the decision by the opposition candidate in Peru's presidential election to withdraw from the race because, he said, it was rigged; the UN Security Council's decision to impose an arms embargo against both Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the Ethiopian army's successful offensive in Eritrea that forced hundreds of thousands of Eritreans to flee their homes; the victory of the opposition candidate in the Dominican Republic's presidential election; the World Bank's decision to resume lending to Iran after seven years, over U.S. objections; the final vote by the South Carolina legislature to remove the Confederate flag from atop the state capitol; the announcement by Time Warner and Disney that they had settled an argument that temporarily caused ABC television signals; a new study by

psychologists at UCLA, which found that men and women react quite differently to stress; and finally, a new computer virus, akin to but more damaging than the "Love Bug" that had begun circulating on the Internet, infecting many computers.

In his office filled with stacks of books, just off the newsroom of ABC News, Peter Jennings confronted the videotape of his *World News Tonight* newscast of October 6, 1983, as an analytical challenge.

Like CBS and NBC newscasts from the early 1980s, this one emphasized foreign news. Its lead story was from Nicaragua, about the crash of a cargo plane carrying arms to the contra rebels. That story filled the first two minutes, forty seconds of the broadcast. There followed a one-minute, forty-second report on peace efforts in Central America. Then two and a half minutes on controversy surrounding the impolitic James Watt, Reagan's short-lived secretary of the Interior. Next was a one-minute, forty-second report making sport of a House of Representatives debate on a pork-barrel water-projects bill.

All together this broadcast devoted five minutes to news from Washington, and more than eight minutes to news from abroad. The longest foreign story (3:20) was a report by Barrie Dunsmore, an experienced correspondent (now retired), on the tenth anniversary of the last Arab-Israeli war. Dunsmore reviewed the history of that decade and the prospects for peace in 1983, packing a lot of information into those 200 seconds. The only feature story took up the last minute and forty seconds of the broadcast, a report on a San Diego zookeeper's efforts to save a newborn emperor penguin.

When the tape was over, Jennings wanted to talk first of all about technology and technique. "Production capabilities in the main have much greater potential, so the technology of production,

PETER JENNINGS

April 24, 2000

A more competitive universe



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the graphics . . . the ability to do maps and things . . . has much greater capacity today than it did then," he said.

Redone today, the stories in that 1983 broadcast "would be all more accessible, to use that word of the nineties," Jennings explained. "They wouldn't be as heavily written. We would strive to put more sound in them, we would strive to put more effect in them, because I think increasingly we are mindful of the variety of competitive universes in which we operate. Competition for the viewer's attention has become greater."

What does that mean in practical terms? He said the stories from 1983 "seemed longer than we would give them on the air today." If they were redone now, "I think [the broadcast] would be slightly edgier, slightly more staccato. It [the '83 show] seemed to have a kind of potential to let the mind wander, which I think we would avoid now."

**U**nder some prodding, Jennings acknowledged that the subjects addressed on his broadcast had changed too. Despite his own interest in such stories, "we do not do a lot of 'process' pieces out of Washington," stories explaining what the government is up to. And "there's a lot of foreign news on that [1983] broadcast that you would not see on a regular basis on an evening newscast today."

How has the presence of ABC News overseas changed since Jennings made his own reputation as a foreign correspondent? "Much slimmer. Much slimmer."

Why the cutback? Jennings blamed money, technology, and "national confusion" about the importance of foreign news. And "our own uncertainty [at ABC] about who we are and our commitment in this new marketplace" was also a factor. The network's attitude toward spending money had changed profoundly, Jennings said. "When we send a reporter into the field today it has to be costed out before the reporter travels . . . In other words, if we want to send a reporter to Libya, our accounting department wants to know in advance how much it is going to cost."

What was the purpose of the evening-news broadcast in 2000? "I think our mission . . . is to try to stay with the major national and international stories of the day

which are relevant to and/or important to Americans. And on a more provincial basis, we are very conscious . . . [of] trying to put stories on the air which have some resonance in Oregon as well as in Massachusetts."

Definitions of news were changing, Jennings said. "There's much greater demand for personal news . . . about health and personal finance," for example. He said he was trying to emphasize technology news, and he was proud ABC has a religion correspondent. "We try to do something on business every day." Generally, he said, "we've tried to pick up on what the country's interested in at the moment and tried to accommodate it, if not follow it."

The ABC *World News Tonight* on the night of our conversation with Jennings, April 24, 2000, felt more like a traditional hard-news program than the other two, in part no doubt because of its timing. This was Jennings' first broadcast after the early Saturday morning raid by the Immigration and Naturalization Service to seize Elián González, the young Cuban, from his Miami relatives' home. The first seven minutes of the program were devoted to three items about the raid, all of them informative and aggressively reported. The business story of the day was about Microsoft — its stock fell on Wall Street as its troubles with the government continued. The program included one purely visual feature story: two minutes, forty seconds of beautiful pictures from space taken by the Hubble Space Telescope — no factual information, but remarkable photographs.

The longest item on the program, just over four minutes, was also its only foreign story, another ominous report on terrorists affiliated with Osama bin Laden. This was the regular feature called "A Closer Look," normally the longest segment of the broadcast.

Like the CBS report on the same subject, this one conveyed very little hard information and a lot of generalized anxiety. A correspondent reporting from highly photogenic mountainous regions on the Afghan-Pakistani border told viewers there were "more than a dozen training camps" in the area, "producing a new generation of Muslim fighters: thousands of young men learning to fight the enemies of Islam. Often that means America and its allies." The story includ-

ed a brief interview with an unarmed "Taliban official" who denied the existence of these camps.

What were these "Muslim fighters" trying to accomplish? The correspondent, standing outside one of the training camps, answered that question this way: "On a wall surrounding the camp we noticed this graffiti: 'Yesterday we broke the Soviets. Tomorrow we break America.'"

This story had no "peg" — nothing had happened to make it particularly timely. Nor did it have many confirmed facts, or any new facts at all. Its appeal was its locale — remote and exotic to look at — and, evidently, the implicit threat against the United States it described. It was, obviously, a warning of things to come in September 2001.

In all, Jennings touched on seven events that had occurred that day. His program included seven distinct segments, plus four "reads." There was nineteen minutes for news, one minute and ten seconds for teases, and nine minutes and fifty seconds for commercials.

This wasn't a particularly heavy news day, but ABC did skip a number of stories that could be found in the next day's *Washington Post* and *New York Times*: a Supreme Court argument on whether California could allow voters to participate in primary elections of parties to which they did not belong; the first formal charges in a Los Angeles police corruption scandal brought against three officers; Kenneth Starr's successor, independent counsel Robert Ray, subpoenaing White House e-mail; a pledge by four U.S. foundations of \$100 million to support African universities; George W. Bush and Al Gore both campaigning for president; Kofi Annan, secretary-general of the United Nations, criticizing U.S. nuclear weapons policies at a United Nations conference called to review the Non-Proliferation Treaty; the General Accounting Office's release of a report concluding that there was no factual support for dramatic accusations of gross misbehavior by IRS agents made at heavily televised congressional hearings two years earlier; Secretary of State Madeleine Albright punishing two officials and changing security procedures after the disappearance from the State Department of a laptop computer containing sensitive intelligence information. ■

## 'Accounting wants to know in advance how much it is going to cost'



# Does 9/11 Make A Difference?

**T**he terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001 reopened all the old questions about the future of news on television. The anchors and presidents of the news divisions knew in October 2001 that something big had happened, but were far from certain what it might mean for the future.

"I think it's a great moment in American journalism," Rather told us three weeks after the attacks. "Now, whether we can make this moment last, and how long we can make it last, these are the open questions . . . I'm mildly optimistic, but the italics must be on 'mildly.'"

Peter Jennings of ABC, also speaking shortly after the attacks, expressed similar uncertainty: "The world has changed, at least for now, in very significant ways, and that's a huge, huge, huge news story, and I hope our employers let us continue to cover it. We have had nothing but support so far." Jennings's boss, David Westin, president of ABC News, echoed his anchorman's caution. Speaking of the intense post-attack coverage, Westin said: "I'm very reluctant to say this is the way it's going to be from now on."

Rather predicted the early return of the network executives "who were saying before this happened, 'You just can't survive, much less thrive, without dumbing it down, sleazing it up, going lighter, going softer.' Those voices are bound to return. Now the question is, How many of us will listen to them, to what I consider a false gospel, and how many of us will try to hold the line? And then among those who try to hold the line, how many will succeed?"

One prominent television executive was openly contrite. Walter Isaacson, a former managing editor of *Time* magazine who had recently become chairman of CNN, had been planning to soften CNN's news coverage to compete for viewers with the Fox News Channel when the terrorist attack altered his plans. Television news, he said soon after September 11, had lost its way before the attacks.

"I think this has been a wake-up call to the public and to all of us in the news business that there are certain things that matter more than the latest trivial thing that can cause a ratings boost," Isaacson told *The New York Times*. "It's helped all of us regain our focus."

But Paul Friedman, an executive vice president of ABC News, was not so sure: "I don't know that the current interest [in international news] will continue much beyond this story, however long it lasts."

Questions about money loomed for all news organizations: covering wars costs big money. Initially the corporate owners of all the major networks behaved impeccably: none questioned the expense of covering the story or tried to hold down costs. But the journalists knew this forbearance would be temporary. "The reality is, there will probably be some tightening up" of the news budget, Brokaw said. "How severe or draconian it will be, I don't know," he added in October 2001.

Jennings, acknowledging previous cutbacks in coverage of foreign news, wondered if these cataclysmic events "mean they will put more money into [ABC News], or continue to make it difficult to cover the world in the manner we would like? I don't know the answer. It's just simply hard to know whether an event of this magnitude will alter the business structure of the major news organizations."

But terrorist attacks against the United States could not wipe away the history of the previous fifteen years, which had taken a toll on network news. The traditions that prevailed when Brokaw, Jennings, and Rather came into the television news business had been displaced, as all three of them acknowledged.

We asked each of them if their successors would have the same standing and influence within their networks that they enjoyed, and still sometimes exploited, to preserve traditional news values. No, they all agreed. Rather said he thought it likely that future CBS

management would decide it was "better to have somebody who will concentrate on the presentation of the news" in the anchor's chair — a news reader, not a reporter and editor who is also trying to shape the broadcast, as all three anchors do now. Today's anchors are "brand names," Rather added, so "management has to be careful" not to disagree with them publicly. He's less hopeful about future anchors, and future managements: "I think in the future there's a very strong possibility that what you're going to have [in management] is somebody who doesn't give a damn" about news values.

Jennings said the next anchors won't have had the extensive reporting experience that shaped him, Brokaw, and Rather. "Experience equals authority," Jennings said, so future anchors won't embody the same authority.

Brokaw said anchors and producers would come from a new milieu, where traditional news values were not so important. "Curiously, the people who are coming to us [to work at NBC] are smarter than they've ever been, well-educated. They're children of television and they really want to come work here. And a lot of them, unfortunately, don't give a shit about the news. They want to do magazines or they want to do talk shows."

Speaking in the spring of 2000, Rather went further: "Certainly, journalistic business organizations have stopped believing [in public service] to a very large measure. And we stopped believing that the public cares. At one time [we believed] if you don't sort of radiate with a sense that what you're doing has to do with public service you're going to pay a price. Now the fear is that if you do that, you will pay a price."

In the autumn of 2001, after the terrorist attacks, Rather was a little more hopeful: "I do think that some news organizations, in the wake of this, will change considerably, substantially," and that those changes would be "lasting." He obviously hoped CBS would be one of them, but wasn't sure.

— R.G.K., L.D. Jr.

# FAKING IT

## Sex, Lies, and Women's Magazines

BY LIZA FEATHERSTONE

Standing on line at the grocery store almost anywhere in America, the hapless shopper is bombarded with insistent exhortatory headlines: BLOW HIS MIND; SEXUAL BLISS SECRETS!; GET HIS SEXUAL ATTENTION INSTANTLY; WHAT HE'S THINKING ABOUT YOU . . . NAKED. Perhaps she stands in front of them to prevent her mother or her kid from reading them aloud. Or she skims the copy to see if it might deliver the promised ecstasy. Whether or not she actually buys women's magazines, she can't escape their sexual anxieties, enthusiasms, and obsessions.

Our shopper might have been all ears at a fall cocktail-hour panel of women's magazine editors, hosted by Media-bistro.com, a media networking organization, and held at Obeca Li, a trendy nouvelle Asian restaurant in lower Manhattan. Audience members, mostly senior-level editors and writers for women's magazines, joined the panelists in voicing many familiar complaints about the industry: too many skinny models, even more emaciated feature stories, and too much advertiser influence on editorial content. Laurie Abraham, executive editor of *Elle* magazine, however, had something else on her mind. The worst thing about women's magazines, she asserted during the panel discussion, is how much "we lie about sex."

Under normal circumstances, a roomful of experienced journalists might rise up in outrage at being called liars. But Abraham's statement was met with nods of guilty agreement and mildly embarrassed "tell me something I don't know" shrugs. No one denied the charge.

This is not Watergate, of course, or even Monica-gate. Yet these ubiquitous stories about sex are presented as journalism, chock full of analysis and quotes, and they are surely believed by many of their readers. They are a formi-

dable cultural force, shaping and reinforcing our attitudes about men and women, orgasms and relationships. Women's magazines run scrupulously reported and fact-checked articles on such subjects as breast cancer and women under the Taliban. Do they have a problem with sex?

Well, yes, it turns out, they do. Many writers, editors, and fact-checkers involved with these sex articles (most of whom asked that their identities be protected with the top-secrecy accorded Seymour Hersh's CIA sources) agreed that the editorial standards for them are abysmal. To return to Abraham's blunt characterization: these articles are full of lies.

Fashion and beauty magazines like *Vogue* or *Allure* seem to avoid sex, perhaps because it demands so many aesthetic compromises — inevitably messing up eyeliner or hair. It is the life-style magazines like *Mademoiselle*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, *Marie Claire*, and others that most often run the most features dedicated to sex and relationship conundrums. Within these service-oriented magazines, the worst abuses seem to occur in a specific genre — the relationship/advice story (OPPOSITES ATTRACT, THE SEVEN-YEAR ITCH), which is usually illustrated by ebullient quotes from supposedly real women ("Marisa, a 26-year-old executive secretary"). Just about everyone interviewed for this story said that these stories were embellished.

"These stories were so 'tweaked,'" says a former fact-checker at *Mademoiselle*, which folded last fall, "that checking them was not a priority." A woman who works for *Glamour* acknowledges that quotes are routinely rewritten. "They get people to interview people — or purport to interview people," but quotes are then rephrased to sound as silly and perky as the magazine's copy. "No one talks like that,"



she says. Former *Glamour* fact-checker Amy Feitelberg is even blunter: "Quotes were totally changeable."

The former *Mademoiselle* checker says of the sex articles, "When I first got there, I would try to check those first-time-I-had-sex quotes. You know, 'It was Christmas Eve, we made a fire . . . And I would get blank looks' from editors. 'They'd say, 'Um, you want to call these people?'"

A former *Cosmopolitan* editor, interviewed by cell phone during a manicure/pedicure, says that *Cosmo* nearly always changed the ages of people quoted, to hit the magazine's mid-twenty-something target readership. Writers and editors often interview their friends, and "we didn't know anyone of the correct age. Such a nuisance!"

One *Marie Claire* writer says that very often, after interviewing couples in intimate detail about their sex life, her editors will ask her to go back to her sources and ask them to change their answers. "It's totally unethical," she says, "and puts me as a writer in an uncomfortable, awkward position." Still, she admits, she complies.

Even more oddly, many of the people discussed in these stories simply do not exist. The former *Cosmo* editor says that when the qualifier "Names have been changed" appeared, the characters in the story were composites. But a fact-checker at another top-circulation women's magazine says, "Composite" gives it too

much credit. It's much more invented than that. 'Names have been changed' can mean anything, including 'Totally made up.'

"I don't think I ever made anything up wholesale," the ex-*Cosmo* editor says. "But in a tight spot, we'd brainstorm." The anecdotes, she says, "were always things that *could* have happened."

## THE STABILITY OF THE UNIVERSE

In women's magazines as in life, motives for lying about sex vary greatly. Many attribute the fibs to deadline pressure, and the need to produce continuously diverting copy. "It has to get out the door and it has to sell," says one editor. Another editor, however, blames her colleagues' giggly, girlish attitude toward sex, adding: "It's not a bad thing to be playful about it. But what dismayed me was how unseriously they took journalism, and that was much more likely to happen in articles about sex."

Yet some factual stretches are aimed at making the sex stories "more realistic," explains the former *Cosmo* editor. The staff would sometimes balk at an anecdote if they thought that "no one would really do that." Of course, people's ideas about what others "really" do in bed can be rather narrow. On the Mediabistro panel, Laurie Abraham recalled writing a story for *Glamour* on "reviving your sex life":

"I quoted my best friend all through school who's from Cleveland, Ohio, like I am. And she told me that she and her husband — they had been married like, eight years — had sex five times a week. And so it was edited out and it was actually changed to three times a week!" Why? "Because the editor couldn't believe that a couple, married for eight years, was having sex five times a week."

Once, discussing a prospective personal essay with a *Marie Claire* editor, a writer was asked to change a reference to a female lover — turning her into a man. "Women's magazines have a very specific idea of what's 'normal,'" says a *Glamour* writer. "Anything that deviates threatens the stability of the universe. They think it will freak out the reader."

*Cosmo* has historically taken a different route, exaggerating to make copy racier. But the former *Cosmo* editor, now a free-lance writer, has been chagrined to encounter new ways of lying. "I just wrote a story for another women's mag-

azine, and the fact-checker called and I didn't recognize any of my anecdotes," she reports indignantly. "They made them much tamer!"

While the worst abuses occur in the anecdotal stories, pieces on sexual health often have exaggeration problems of their own. Some women's magazines, so intent on selling their readers on having sex, make dubious claims about its health benefits. Their persistence here is a bit puzzling (after all, who are these people who need to be coaxed with the promise of better vitamin B-levels?) but the "science" it leads to can be wacky indeed. Sessions with your "very personal trainer," for example, are often said to burn calories and improve your complexion (WHY SEX MAKES YOU PRETTIER.)

The sex-health claims, a fact-checker points out, "always, interestingly, equate sex and orgasm. But you often have one without the other, sadly." And claims about the calorie-burning powers of sex, she says, are always based on the premise that for a full hour, "you are seriously fucking, fucking, fucking — which nobody does for more than a few minutes." None of these claims "can be proved false," the fact-checker sighs. "But just think of all those poor women lying there . . . thinking they're going to get skinny!"

## CAN THIS GENRE BE SAVED?

Does any of this matter? Editors' opinions vary. "Hey, it ain't *The New York Times*," the *Cosmo* loyalist says in her former employer's defense. "We should not be in the business of misinforming people, but we are publishing an entertaining, popular magazine that people want to read."

Not everyone shares her blithe attitude. A top *Glamour* editor, Cindi Leive, recently revamped the magazine to include more non-sexual content — "Our readers are whole people," she says. "Not just pelvic areas." But she denied that sex stories were held to a lower standard at her magazine or that *Glamour* quotes were made up or even embellished. "I can't speak to the standards at all magazines, but most editors would be horrified to think that went on," she says. "It's sad that you would even ask." Leive was more incensed by the former *Cosmo* editor's implication that these stories should be dismissed as entertainment.

"That is a slap in the face to the millions of readers who take your magazine seriously," she fumed. "And our reader takes all parts of our magazine seriously." Chief editors at *Cosmo* and *Marie Claire*, the two other magazines named here, declined to "participate" in this article, according to Lili Root, the spokeswoman for Hearst.

Could mainstream sex writing be playful and entertaining, but also honest about people's lives? At the Mediabistro gathering, another former *Cosmo* editor, Chandra Czape, wasn't sure. "Frankly, I think the really good journalists get frustrated writing for women's magazines," she said. "Why should they spend their life writing Seven Tips for Greater Sex? It may be something you do sometimes to pay the bills. But I mean, come on, this cannot be the height of someone's journalistic career."

Yet, considering how important sex is to nearly everyone, isn't this attitude a bit too cynical? Perhaps the lies in women's magazines are part of a deeper social disease. Despite the omnipresence of sex (and its proven ability to sell magazines, as well as perfume, cigars, and just about anything else), we still try to deny its importance. The coverlines on these magazines may offer a clue to the problem: just count the number of times the word "secret" appears, as if the subject so loudly advertised is still shameful — and perhaps a bit silly.

"Women's magazines sometimes seem like they feel afraid to tell the entire truth," Debbie Stoller, founder of *Bust*, an alternative women's magazine, said at the Mediabistro event. She started her magazine (which folded in October but will return under a new publisher this spring) in response to that lack of reality — not only the specific lies but the absence of real women, with all their perversions, cellulite, and intelligence — in mainstream women's magazines. Her one editorial absolute? She will not publish "anything that's not completely authentic."

We can hope that Stoller's spirit is rubbing off on the mainstream. One recent *Marie Claire* headline stood out from the newsstand's usual breathlessness: THE TRUTH ABOUT WOMEN AND SEX. A bit ambitious, perhaps, but emphatically worth a try. ■

Liza Featherstone, a former CJR fact-checker, writes frequently about sex and culture.



# OPENING JUVENILE COURTS

## *Children Should Not Be Numbers*

BARBARA WHITE STACK

In her first act as chief justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court, Kathleen Blatz unlocked the doors to the state's juvenile courtrooms in June 1998. As she escorted reporters and the public into the previously secret chambers, she explained why she did it: "I have never made a connection between a closed court and justice."

At least one of her fellow justices thought she was nuts. He predicted that Blatz's three-year experiment with open hearings in abuse and neglect cases would cripple the chief judge's ability to administer the courts.

It didn't. In fact, Blatz's move is simply part of a national trend toward reversing juvenile court's Star Chamber status. Since 1990, virtually every state in the nation has opened some of the court's delinquency hearings. Now there is a steady movement toward opening the other end of juvenile court, the side that deals with abused and neglected children. A dozen states routinely admit the press or public to all or some abuse and neglect hearings, and at least four others are considering it. Media in twenty-two of the thirty-eight states that remain closed have the power to give this sluggish movement a shove. That's because these twenty-two specifically guarantee public hearings in their state constitutions. The vast majority of the provisions simply state: "All courts shall be open."

The *Oregonian* used its constitution to open juvenile court in Oregon in 1980. The *New York Daily News* used a state law with similar language guaranteeing open hearings to pressure the state's top judge into opening the doors to the state's family courts in 1997. My paper, *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, went to court in the fall of 2001, state constitution in hand, demanding open hearings. If the *Post-Gazette* wins, that'll be one down, twenty-one states to go. And if those twenty-two states open hearings, those without constitutional guarantees are likely to follow the trend toward free access.

Or, more precisely, a *return* to free access. The first juvenile court in the world — the one created by Illinois for Chicago in 1899 — was open, as were those in most of the states that followed Illinois' lead. The social reformers who advocated for the court wanted it closed. Their argument was that the misdeeds of bad boys and perverse parents should be shielded from the prying eyes of the press and public so that when the offenders reformed their ways, they could live normal lives. This court was to be a place that saved children and families. That's all fine, the newspapers in Chicago argued in editorials 100 years ago, but the new court should not be secret because judges could do anything behind closed doors, and the public would have no way to know. The reformers caved on this point in order to get the law creating the court passed. And so, the first juvenile court, like civil and criminal courts, was open, and reporters have covered it ever since.

Juvenile courts in other states were open at the outset as well. It was not until the 1970s that many states closed the doors, adopting virtually word for word the secrecy language recommended in 1968 by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws. The media at the time remained largely silent; no one — not a lawmaker, not a media lobbyist — seemed to have noticed that closure laws defied state constitutions.

The open history of juvenile courts is an important factor in lawsuits seeking their reopening now. When newspapers have challenged other sorts of closed hearings, appeals courts typically have based their decisions in part on whether there was a history of openness. In cases involving juvenile court, judges across this country, including those on the U.S. Supreme Court in one decision, have stated as fact that juvenile court has a history of secrecy. They need to be set straight on this point.

And they need to be told why it's important for court hearings to be open. Interestingly, many of those closest to juvenile court, those who've practiced in its clandestine halls longest, provide some of

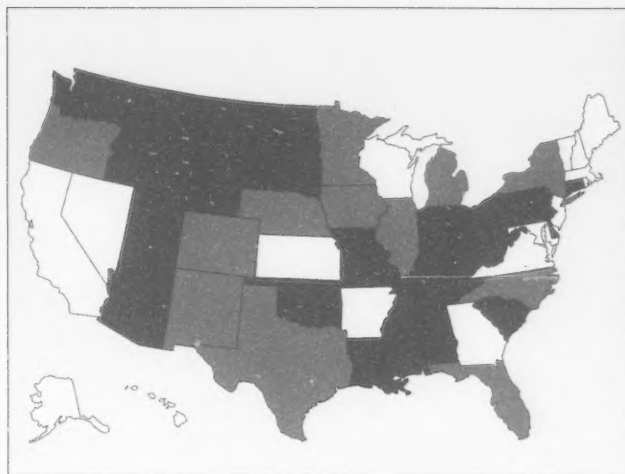
the most eloquent arguments for open hearings. Among them are Martin Guggenheim, director of New York University's law clinic, which represents parents accused of abuse; Minnesota Chief Justice Blatz, who practiced in juvenile court for years before becoming a judge, and Minneapolis Juvenile Court Judge Herbert Lefler, who chose to remain in juvenile court when many colleagues fled.

Guggenheim, an expert in family law, called for open hearings more than a decade ago in a letter to *The New York Times*. He believes the blind acceptance of secrecy is an unfortunate artifact of the delusion that this "child-saver" court does only good. The delusion, he says, is dangerous: "We need to treat this court like all other aspects of government. We need to eliminate this knee-jerk reaction of support."

Blatz, in her previous incarnation as a lawyer for the state in child welfare cases, saw kids wait six years in foster care before the court terminated their abusive parents' custody rights and completed adoption. She saw kids bounced to new foster homes, five, ten, even twenty times. She saw children denied attorneys or guardians in 40 percent of the cases. It all made her wonder exactly who those closed doors protected. She believed the public wouldn't countenance these abuses — if it knew. "I believe the public needs to hear the stories of individual children so they are motivated to change the child welfare system and provide the needed support," Blatz says. "Children should not be numbers. They should be real children, our children."

One child who became very real to Minnesotans during Blatz's experiment was "the garbage baby." In this case, which landed in Judge Lefler's lap, a fifteen-year-old threw her newborn in a garbage can on January 12, 2000, in Minneapolis. And though talk show callers criticized Lefler's decision to allow the teenager to regain custody of the baby, who survived the ordeal, it would surely have been worse if he'd made it behind closed doors. At least





**22** states with closed juvenile court hearings but constitutional guarantees of open court

**12** states with open juvenile court hearings in abuse and neglect cases

reporters were able to hear the testimony and explain Lefler's decision in full context, rather than try to piece together a coherent story from the bits of information thrown at them by the tiny number of people willing to talk afterwards.

Reporters forced to stand outside Lefler's courtroom would not, for instance, have heard a foster mother who temporarily cared for the garbage baby tell Lefler that the fifteen-year-old mother had developed a loving relationship with the child, who waved, smiled, and bounded when the girl arrived for visits. The foster mother said her own children adored the teen because she got down on the floor to play with them. Nor would they have heard experts testify that the girl had successfully denied her pregnancy, even to herself; nor heard her say that she thought the baby was dead when she put her in the garbage. Whether Minnesotans agreed with Lefler's decision or not, at least they knew why he made it.

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It's not clear why the Oregon case didn't inspire papers across the country to begin pounding on their juvenile court doors with their own constitutions. It could be simply that before the Internet age, few other papers heard about the decision. It could be that even those who did were unaware that their own state constitutions provided similar protections.

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Using the constitution to open the courts involves a legal battle. It's costly. It's likely to be protracted. The *Daily News* appealed case after case when it was evicted from family court hearings, and all the while its lawyer lobbied for openness behind the scenes. The *Oregonian* had to appeal all the way to its state supreme court. The *Post-Gazette* is prepared to do that. Other media, even in this tough financial period, could join the struggle to open the courtrooms, where billions of dollars are spent annually, and, more importantly, the futures of hundreds of thousands of children are decided. ■

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# OPENING JUVENILE COURTS

## *Children Should Not Be Numbers*

BARBARA WHITE STACK

In her first act as chief justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court, Kathleen Blatz unlocked the doors to the state's juvenile courtrooms in June 1998. As she escorted reporters and the public into the previously secret chambers, she explained why she did it: "I have never made a connection between a closed court and justice."

At least one of her fellow justices thought she was nuts. He predicted that Blatz's three-year experiment with open hearings in abuse and neglect cases would cripple the chief judge's ability to administer the courts.

It didn't. In fact, Blatz's move is simply part of a national trend toward reversing juvenile court's Star Chamber status. Since 1990, virtually every state in the nation has opened some of the court's delinquency hearings. Now there is a steady movement toward opening the other end of juvenile court, the side that deals with abused and neglected children. A dozen states routinely admit the press or public to all or some abuse and neglect hearings, and at least four others are considering it. Media in twenty-two of the thirty-eight states that remain closed have the power to give this sluggish movement a shove. That's because these twenty-two specifically guarantee public hearings in their state constitutions. The vast majority of the provisions simply state: "All courts shall be open."

The *Oregonian* used its constitution to open juvenile court in Oregon in 1980. The *New York Daily News* used a state law with similar language guaranteeing open hearings to pressure the state's top judge into opening the doors to the state's family courts in 1997. My paper, *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, went to court in the fall of 2001, state constitution in hand, demanding open hearings. If the *Post-Gazette* wins, that'll be one down, twenty-one states to go. And if those twenty-two states open hearings, those without constitutional guarantees are likely to follow the trend toward free access.

Or, more precisely, a *return* to free access. The first juvenile court in the world — the one created by Illinois for Chicago in 1899 — was open, as were those in most of the states that followed Illinois' lead. The social reformers who advocated for the court wanted it closed. Their argument was that the misdeeds of bad boys and perverse parents should be shielded from the prying eyes of the press and public so that when the offenders reformed their ways, they could live normal lives. This court was to be a place that saved children and families. That's all fine, the newspapers in Chicago argued in editorials 100 years ago, but the new court should not be secret because judges could do anything behind closed doors, and the public would have no way to know. The reformers caved on this point in order to get the law creating the court passed. And so, the first juvenile court, like civil and criminal courts, was open, and reporters have covered it ever since.

Juvenile courts in other states were open at the outset as well. It was not until the 1970s that many states closed the doors, adopting virtually word for word the secrecy language recommended in 1968 by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws. The media at the time remained largely silent; no one — not a lawmaker, not a media lobbyist — seemed to have noticed that closure laws defied state constitutions.

The open history of juvenile courts is an important factor in lawsuits seeking their reopening now. When newspapers have challenged other sorts of closed hearings, appeals courts typically have based their decisions in part on whether there was a history of openness. In cases involving juvenile court, judges across this country, including those on the U.S. Supreme Court in one decision, have stated as fact that juvenile court has a history of secrecy. They need to be set straight on this point.

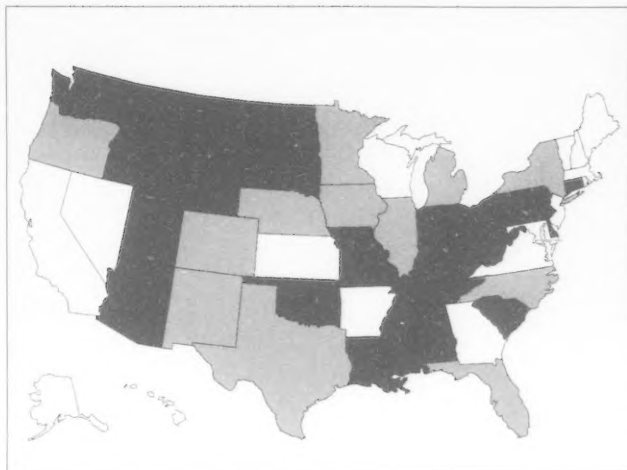
And they need to be told why it's important for court hearings to be open. Interestingly, many of those closest to juvenile court, those who've practiced in its clandestine halls longest, provide some of

the most eloquent arguments for open hearings. Among them are Martin Guggenheim, director of New York University's law clinic, which represents parents accused of abuse; Minnesota Chief Justice Blatz, who practiced in juvenile court for years before becoming a judge, and Minneapolis Juvenile Court Judge Herbert Lefler, who chose to remain in juvenile court when many colleagues fled.

Guggenheim, an expert in family law, called for open hearings more than a decade ago in a letter to *The New York Times*. He believes the blind acceptance of secrecy is an unfortunate artifact of the delusion that this "child-saver" court does only good. The delusion, he says, is dangerous: "We need to treat this court like all other aspects of government. We need to eliminate this knee-jerk reaction of support."

Blatz, in her previous incarnation as a lawyer for the state in child welfare cases, saw kids wait six years in foster care before the court terminated their abusive parents' custody rights and completed adoption. She saw kids bounced to new foster homes, five, ten, even twenty times. She saw children denied attorneys or guardians in 40 percent of the cases. It all made her wonder exactly who those closed doors protected. She believed the public wouldn't countenance these abuses — if it knew. "I believe the public needs to hear the stories of individual children so they are motivated to change the child welfare system and provide the needed support," Blatz says. "Children should not be numbers. They should be real children, our children."

One child who became very real to Minnesotans during Blatz's experiment was "the garbage baby." In this case, which landed in Judge Lefler's lap, a fifteen-year-old threw her newborn in a garbage can on January 12, 2000, in Minneapolis. And though talk show callers criticized Lefler's decision to allow the teenager to regain custody of the baby, who survived the ordeal, it would surely have been worse if he'd made it behind closed doors. At least



**22** states with closed juvenile court hearings but constitutional guarantees of open court

**12** states with open juvenile court hearings in abuse and neglect cases

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# VOICES

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### TV Marti

It costs millions and reaches no one; shutter this cold-war relic

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### Librarian's Plea

For the sake of research and revision, leave those citations in the story



VOICES, funded in part by the Ford Foundation, offers independent viewpoints on a variety of subjects. CJR welcomes contributions. You may submit manuscripts to the locations listed on page 4.

## The After-Life of a Photo That Touched a Nation



**BY TOM FRANKLIN**

Tom Franklin is a photographer at *The Record* in Bergen County, New Jersey.

**M**uch of what happened to me on September 11 is a blur, but this moment I clearly remember: It was 4:45 P.M., and all the firemen and rescue workers were evacuating Ground Zero after word came that a third building — WTC 7 — was ready to fall. I had only a few frames left, and an entire day's worth of pictures to develop, so I prepared to head back to New Jersey.

Before leaving, I took one last look at Ground Zero. Three firefighters were attaching an American flag to a slanted pole while standing on top of a pile of rubble about fifteen feet high. I was about thirty yards away, and I zoomed in and fired off a few frames with my digital camera. The flag-raising itself was spontaneous and uncereceremonious. It took only a few minutes, and I don't think the firemen had any idea they were being watched. One firefighter hoisted the flag up as the other two looked on. I shot a burst of frames as it went up, then ran to where they were. But before I could shoot any more they disappeared into the crowd leaving the area.

It was over like that, or so I thought.

This photograph of three New York City firemen raising the flag has become to many the symbol of that horrific day. From the very moment it was first published in *The Record*, it has taken on a life of its own, and has lodged in the public consciousness like no other photograph since the flag-raising on Iwo Jima.

I have received thousands of letters, e-mails, and phone calls. Many just wanted to tell me how much this image meant to them, how it lifted them and gave them hope at a time of deep despair. Others called it a symbol of strength and courage, a reminder that Americans were united and strong. Former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani called it "one of the most important photographs I have ever seen."

The outpouring of sentiment touched me, yet at times saddened me as well. A fellow photographer in New England e-mailed to say how awesome he thought the photo was, then told me about his dad, who was among the missing. His story and countless others haunt me. The pain of that day still hov-



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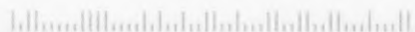
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ers over this picture, a ghostly reminder that, behind all the attention and accolades, so many important lives were lost.

My photograph has been used in ways I never could have imagined: Christmas tree ornaments, pumpkin carvings, figurines, coins, jewelry, T-shirts, and plaques — all without authorization. It was reenacted at the World Series and the Super Bowl, and reproduced on country barns and people's lawns. It was at the core of a heated debate over a memorial statue, and was scattered across Afghanistan by the U.S. military, part of its propaganda campaign. I have driven past thirty-foot murals of it painted on the sides of buildings, and seen it staring back at me from bumper stickers in traffic jams.

While covering the World Series in October, I had the strange experience of having an unwitting storeowner try to sell me the photograph on decals. A colleague, Dave Adornato, and I were shopping for FDNY hats outside Yankee Stadium before the game, when Dave saw the decals for sale. "Hey Tom, there's your photo," he said. The man with the decals held one up and studied it, then studied my face. "Doesn't look like you," he said. Dave told him that I was the photographer. "Oh," he said. "In that case, special price for you."

The recent flap over the firefighter memorial statue, which was to be modeled after my photo, was unfortunate, yet so ironic. The three firemen in the photo are white, but the statue was to depict a white, a Latino, and an African-American. After an outcry, the memorial's planners went back to the drawing board. I am disappointed that the photograph — the source of so much unity and pride — became the subject of such division.

On September 11, it was difficult to pack my emotions away and focus on my job. I was scared. I wanted to be home with my wife and family. I thought about my older brother, Stephen, who works in lower Manhattan and takes the train through the World Trade Center each morning. But everything I saw was so worthy of photographing. The huge, smoldering mound of metal beams and concrete and cables. Firemen searching for survivors. Rescue workers shuffling



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back and forth, while others stood around in shock. I recorded it all. I understood how important my job was; that images like mine would be looked at throughout history.

I support the idea of a memorial representing diversity, but when you change the elements of a news photograph, or in this case the statue of that photograph, it diminishes the credibility of photojour-

nalists as chroniclers of history. The picture I took on September 11 captures an important moment. Like history itself, the photo should not be changed, even for the best of intentions.

The fact that countless people have told me that my work has given them hope in a difficult time gives me great satisfaction. It's my hope that this picture can continue to unite us. ■

# The Brief, Ineffective Life Of the Pentagon's Media Pool



BY MARK THOMPSON

Mark Thompson, a Pulitzer Prize-winning correspondent at *Time*, covered the pool's birth for *CJR* in the November/December 1987 issue.

The Department of Defense National Media Pool, a cranky child born of a loveless marriage, died after a long illness during the final quarter of 2001. It was fourteen.

The pool, a child of the Pentagon and the U.S. press, was conceived in the wake of the military's ham-fisted handling of reporters during its 1983 invasion of Grenada. It was an imperfect solution to a vexing problem: How to ensure independent press coverage of the nation's most sensitive military operations.

The pool came to life on July 19, 1987, when a band of ten reporters took off from Andrews Air Force Base for its first real-world deployment. Under strict secrecy, they flew to the Persian Gulf to witness the reflagging of Kuwaiti oil tankers with U.S. flags. They were on hand to document a first-class snafu when a mine blew a hole in the hull of the first tanker the U.S. military had pledged to protect.

But the pool would bear witness to no such embarrassments this time around. If there ever had been a time to use the pool, it came — and, alas, went — during the final three months of last year, as the U.S. began attacking those it deemed responded for the terror attacks that killed 3,000 people on September 11.

The pool, truth be told, had been in poor health for years. Made up of journalists representing wires, newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio, it hadn't been deployed on a real-world mission since 1996; its most recent practice run was in 1997. But after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, those of us in

the pool during the final rotation of 2001 — the membership changes every three months — thought its time had come.

Initially, the Pentagon thought so, too. Washington news bureaus were told to gear up for action. The military even called in those whose pool duty wasn't slated to start until the first quarter of 2002. "Let's face it, it's more likely you're going to be used now than in the last ten years," Army Lt. Col. Lane Van de Steeg, the Pentagon pool coordinator, told bureau chiefs September 28. "Who's to say we won't have to call out two pools at the same time?"

A week later, having been on alert for a scant four days, pool members got calls at 2 A.M. ordering us to Andrews within four hours. In the predawn darkness, our military minders practiced sweeping our cars for bombs — for those who ignored the Pentagon's plea to take taxis to better hide our tracks from inquiring spouses ("Honey, why have you been up since 2 A.M., and why are you packing so, um, strangely?" they'd ask. "Don't worry, darling," reporters were told to respond. "Just an early day at the office that might stretch into a week. Have you seen my passport?") We ran our bags through security, and pretended to get required vaccinations. But it was only a drill. We were back at our desks by lunch.

"They won't start the war," pool members felt, "without us." But shortly before the bombing began on October 7, we heard disquieting rumbles. "Don't bet," a senior military officer told me, "that the pool will be called before the war begins." Sure enough, he was right.

But if we were going to miss the

opening shot, it seemed inevitable that the pool would be tapped for sensitive missions where the Pentagon would want only a handful of reporters on the scene. There were two historic assignments ideal for the pool: the deployment of 1,000 members of the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division to a Uzbekistan base (the first deployment of U.S. troops to a former Soviet state), and the dispatch of the USS *Kitty Hawk* to the Arabian Sea (the first time a special-forces war was waged from the deck of a U.S. carrier).

But despite such opportunities, the Pentagon never mustered the pool. "I'd be happy to mobilize the pool and send you off," Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told frustrated bureau chiefs on October 18, "but I frankly would not know where to send you." He said he'd be happy to dispatch the pool to Uzbekistan, where the last pool mission had ended five years before. "The problem is," he said, "we're in a country that is not happy" to have reporters around.

And the *Kitty Hawk*? He ultimately vetoed that notion, too.

So as the war in Afghanistan wound down, key pieces went uncovered by reporters. Both soldiers and journalists know how easily the truth can be fudged. During that maiden 1987 deployment, the Pentagon counted more on the press pool for fast reports of what was going on after the supertanker *Bridgeton* hit a mine than on the military's own chain of command.

In addition to its parents, the pool is survived by such stories untold, and at least some journalists who dutifully participated in such a half-baked scheme, believing that was better than none at all. ■



## After 9/11: Where Are the Voices of Women?



**BY GENEVA OVERHOLSER**

Geneva Overholser (genevaoh@aol.com), a syndicated columnist for The Washington Post Writers Group, writes regularly for CJR about newspapers. She holds an endowed chair at the University of Missouri school of journalism. Among positions she has held are editorial writer for *The New York Times*, editor of *The Des Moines Register*, and ombudsman for *The Washington Post*. She also served nine years on the Pulitzer Prize board.

I'm willing to bet you haven't fretted lately about how women are faring in newspapering. I hadn't been fretting much myself — until a dispiriting series of realizations began to wash over me. The first came in the eerie unreality following September 11. A few days into that awful time, I started to notice a haunting silence amid the views I was finding in America's newspapers: it was the absence of women's voices.

To test my feeling, I examined the op-ed pages of three of our most influential newspapers: *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*. I found that, in the first week after September 11, they carried eighty-eight signed pieces. Five were by women. After I delivered this observation in a National Public Radio commentary, I began to hear from listeners.

For example: Tracy Lucht, a student at the University of Maryland, e-mailed me that she had found, in looking at newspaper coverage of the 2000 election fiasco in Florida, that it was covered primarily by men. In five Florida papers and *The New York Times*, she noted, this huge story carried 135 male bylines, twenty-one female.

Then Jan Schaffer, executive director of the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, pointed out to me a study from Northwestern's Media Management Center showing a surprisingly strong imbalance remaining in top newspaper management jobs. The authors said the study grew out of the realization among the center's leaders that they were routinely seeing only a handful of women among the thirty or forty executives gathered for seminars. Yet the school's journal-

ism classes were more than 70 percent women. What was going on?

The answer was that, after some strong progress in the 1980s, women's rise to the top reaches of the field had stalled, so that "women today fill about thirty percent of senior management jobs, the same as several years ago." As for the highest positions — president, publisher, and CEO — a survey of 137 newspapers with a circulation over 85,000 showed only 8 percent held by women. Moreover, the study cited retention problems with women and various "ceilings" that they seemed to be hitting (becoming managing editors, for example, but not top editors).

The authors said they hoped their findings would spark discussion in the industry. But I haven't heard it. Indeed, I think many would hasten to say we've had this discussion, and solved this problem. Yet that blithe assumption is bleakly refuted by the numbers, which demonstrate instead how little has changed in these "feminist" decades. Certainly, women now increasingly dominate the (low-salaried) entry ranks. But in the choicest assignments — and at the top — they are scarce. Indeed, the industry begins to look disturbingly like one of those "pink color" ghettos — a trade shunned by men, except for those who run it.

I was reminded recently of one reason for the slow pace of change, when I was lucky enough to be part of a PBS show made possible by Joan Konner, former dean of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. *She Says: Women in News*, examined the work of various women who've made contributions to journalism. One powerful truth emerged: many of these women journalists had

struggled mightily to balance family and work. When I became a newspaper editor, I looked up and saw editors like Janet Chusmir of *The Miami Herald* and Katherine Fanning of *The Christian Science Monitor*, and I felt a boundless surge of opportunity. But I was underestimating the fear of change and the power of tradition in a culture as deeply rooted as that of newsrooms.

While chewing over how slow is change — and how adamant the denial of any hint that we need to — I stumbled across another interesting tidbit on the Media Management Center's Web site: a study called "Gen X in the Newsroom: Expectations, Attitudes Don't Fit Traditional Culture." Young people nowadays, it notes, "are quite different from their Baby Boomer bosses. These folks don't want to work long and irregular hours, want to be well paid, and expect to get help with advancement. They are part of a job-hopping generation, so their needs will have to be taken seriously because there is a shortage of good replacements coming behind them. Newsrooms will need to make some changes to accommodate them."

Wow, I thought: This is just the sort of attitude women — wanting so desperately to be accepted, to blend in — never had the inclination to project. Demanding concessions was the farthest thing from their minds, which may be why so many have stalled, or left the trade, I reflected glumly. But wait: these self-confident and demanding types can't all be men. Not in our craft. Not in those early years. *More* than half must be women. It's not that I like the notion, once again, of waiting till numbers overtake traditions. But inevitability does have a nice ring to it. ■

# Listen Up, Bias Mongers!

## The Audience Doesn't Agree



BY ANDREW KOHUT

Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, writes regularly for *CJR* about public attitudes toward the media.

With the start of a new election season, the debate about ideological bias in the news media has come back big time. This perennial issue was not high-profile during the Clinton years. It was hard to tag news organizations as too liberal while they feasted on Bill Clinton scandals.

But the Bush presidency and September 11 have changed the landscape of media criticism. We now have Bernard Goldberg's book, *Bias*, in which he charges his former employer, CBS, and the news media generally, with liberal bias. And then there is Roger Ailes's Fox News — which has become to some the network that provides a conservative point of view for the sake of balance, and pro-American reporting of the war in Afghanistan.

Goldberg's book is a bestseller and Fox News is beating CNN in many prime news markets and among key demographic groups. But broad public opinion about political reporting is more complicated than a perceived liberal bias — and also more condemning.

Pew's national survey in November found that the public image of the news media had improved for the first time in sixteen years in response to the way the terror attacks were covered. Americans held more favorable opinions of the press's professionalism, patriotism, and morality than before September 11. But that poll still found a plurality that thinks the news media are often politically biased.

On the surface this finding, and others like it, would seem to prove

public support for Goldberg's charges of bias and Ailes's sense that Americans want more balance in political reporting.

The problem with that assumption is that for most Americans political bias in the media is not partisan or ideological. While a small percentage of the public thinks news organizations favor the liberals, almost as many think the press is biased in favor of the conservatives; and a larger percentage see no ideological or partisan pattern in political bias.

This is true in poll after poll, and has been the case for a very long time. For example, a Gallup poll in the spring of 1998 asked respondents to judge the bias of seven types of news organizations — ranging from network news to local newspapers. On average about 27 percent saw a bias in favor of liberals and 19 percent in favor of conservatives. Thirty-six percent rated the media as fair and impartial, while 18 percent had no opinion on the subject. Two years later, Pew found only slightly more Americans saying that the media coverage of George W. Bush's election campaign was unfair (30 percent), than thought that about coverage of Al Gore's campaign (24 percent). The majority said both campaigns were treated fairly by news organizations. Gallup even found that 63 percent thought that coverage of the hyper-contentious Florida recount was unbiased.

What people often mean when they say the press is biased in its political reporting is that it is biased toward its own self-interest. The media are seen as exploitive, as needlessly stirring political

controversy and offering too much contentious punditry. Surveys taken for the ASNE Journalism Credibility Project in 1998 found that 71 percent thought that the cause of bias in television news was a desire for higher ratings, while only 10 percent thought it was due to political bias. Similar answers were given about bias in newspapers.

The news media should not be complacent about the fact that so relatively few people see ideological or partisan bias. But the answer is not to create news outlets that tip in one direction or the other. For all the talk about the impossibilities of achieving objectivity, that is the public's aspiration for the news media. American audiences, except for the most partisan segments, have little appetite for news organizations that tell them only what they want to hear.

A good example is found in attitudes toward coverage of the war on terrorism. While the use of force in Afghanistan had nearly universal support, Pew polls found that a solid majority (64 percent) favored war coverage that is neutral rather than pro-American. An even larger percentage (73 percent) preferred coverage that portrayed all points of view, including those of countries unfriendly to the United States.

Yes, there are enough partisans looking for a cable channel that provides news from a conservative or a liberal point of view. But news organizations that hope to appeal to the broad majority would do well to remember that complaints about bias in the media usually mean self-interest, not a tilt to the left. ■

# TV Marti Has No Viewers — It's Time to Shut It Down



**BY LAWRENCE K. GROSSMAN**

Lawrence K. Grossman, a former president of NBC News and PBS, is a regular columnist for CJR.

In January, Columbia Journalism School professor Richard C. Wald and I, and our wives, traveled through much of Cuba. I asked people we encountered there what they think of TV Marti, the U.S. government's television station that's supposed to beam

an uncensored view of the news to Cubans. I raised the question in Vinales in the west, in Havana (TV Marti's main target), Cienfuegos, Camaguey, Trinidad, and Santiago de Cuba in the east. And I found nobody who's ever seen it.

My unscientific research echoed the findings of a far more reliable study, conducted in August 2001 for the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which oversees Radio and TV Marti. It asked one thousand Cubans if they had watched TV Marti in the past week. Nine hundred ninety-seven said no. In the year 2000, no one reported watching the station's UHF broadcasts. An earlier study found that nine out of ten Cubans had never even heard of TV Marti.

Congress established TV Marti in 1989, while the cold war was still raging. With ingenuity and at great expense, its transmitter was mounted on a balloon tethered 10,000 feet above Cudjoe Key, Florida. Because the Cuban press is a tool of the state, TV Marti, named after the great Cuban independence hero Jose Marti, seemed at the time to be a worthwhile U.S. investment. Alas, it has turned out to be the world's most spectacularly unsuccessful station, with the worst cost-per-thousand viewership of all time. TV Marti goes on the air at 3:30 A.M. and signs off at 8:00 A.M. every day. It operates when nobody watches because international broadcast

rules require that the U.S. not interfere with Cuban broadcast transmissions. To ensure that not even Cuban insomniacs tune in, the Cuban government jams TV Marti so that no picture shows up on the screen.

The Cuban people, like people in poor countries everywhere, are great television fans. They have a choice of two government channels (three in Havana), filled with sports, novelas, documentaries, educational programs, government-controlled news, and long speeches by Fidel Castro. CNN is available only in tourist hotel rooms, which most Cuban citizens are prohibited from entering. Cuba is changing fast, however. The Cubans we talked to yearn for a wider choice of TV programming, which is bound to come in the new digital age. Individually owned satellite dishes are forbidden, but we could see them dotting the landscape, apparently in violation of the law. Internet access in Cuban homes is severely limited, but is becoming more widely available in offices and institutions.

American taxpayers pay heavily for this TV station with no audience. As Senator Max Baucus of Montana said in the Senate in October 2000, "For nine and a half million dollars in the coming fiscal year, \$139 million over the last decade, another hundred million dollars over the next decade, we ask Cubans to get up in the middle of the night to watch snow on a blank screen. This makes no sense at all."

The senator is right. It is a folly imposed on us by politically powerful Cuban exile groups that neither party wants to offend. About seven years ago, former CBS News president David Burke, who then had the job of overseeing Radio and TV Marti and was concerned about

their reputation for news bias, asked ex-*Washington Post* editor Ben Bradlee, Columbia Journalism School dean Joan Konner, a professor at a Florida university, and me to study Radio and TV Marti's programming and report on their accuracy and fairness. Since neither Bradlee, Konner, nor I spoke Spanish we couldn't figure out why we were chosen. What would happen, we asked, if we concluded that the influential chairman of the President's Advisory Board for Cuba Broadcasting, Jorge Mas Canosa, should resign? He was founder and leader of the Cuban American National Foundation, the hard-line exile organization, and it seemed unlikely that Cubans would believe that any news organization under his direction was impartial or trustworthy. The answer we got was, "No way." An election year was coming. Florida is a key state and nobody would risk the enmity of the Cuban exile community. The three of us went home and Bradlee and I sent Burke letters saying thanks but no thanks. Our study never got under way.

Now that the federal budget is awash in deficits, it's time to stop wasting money on TV Marti. Instead, we might try paying Miami radio stations to broadcast honest news to Cuba, as President Kennedy and his FCC Chairman Newton N. Minow arranged to do during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Or maybe we should offer Fidel the TV Marti money if he'll allow his citizens free access to CNN, Voice of America, or any other news service they choose. In the digital age, even the most benighted dictator must realize that he cannot insulate a whole people from the expanding flow of worldwide news. ■

# A Librarian's Plea to Journalists: Give Us a Clue!



**BY DONALD ALTSCHILLER**

Donald Altschiller is a librarian at Boston University and has worked in the Government Documents Division of the Harvard University Library.

In one of his classic comedy routines, George Carlin plays the "Hippy Dippy Weatherman" proffering much information that invariably is useless. At one point, he gives some "quick temperature readings": "68, 74, 79, 83" — without bothering to connect them to any location.

Librarians — particularly government-document librarians — can well appreciate his routine. An earnest patron comes to the Reference Desk looking for "a government publication." Which government? Federal, state, or local? Who wrote the report? What was the title and on what date was it issued? The library user shrugs.

"How did you hear about it?" you ask the patron, who then presents you with the newspaper or magazine article about the report. More often than not, the article doesn't offer a clue to any of your questions.

Take the following lead paragraph in a Reuters article with a Washington dateline, published in *The Boston Globe* on September 14, 1999:

The United States, seeking to maintain pressure on President Saddam Hussein as major powers try to draw up a new policy on Iraq, issued a report yesterday accusing him of deliberately starving his own people.

Sounds like a very important report but the article doesn't provide you with basic information on how to find it. It will be two hours before an intrepid government documents librarian is finally able to track it down.

Or take this AP wire service story datelined London and published in the January 31, 2001, issue of *The New York Times*. It begins like this:

Doctors at a prominent children's hospital took hearts,

brains, eyes and heads from thousands of dead children without the consent of their parents, a government report said today, calling the findings grotesque and appalling.

The article gives only the names of a British hospital and one accused doctor. Knowledgeable librarians will no doubt be able to retrieve this report, but not without a substantial investment of time. (A Google or other general Internet search, for example, would not have helped.)

Searching for official reports certainly doesn't have to be so time-consuming. While many of us love the thrill of the document hunt, reporters could make it easier for the newspaper reader, the librarian, and indeed other journalists by providing more information.

An Associated Press report dated July 9, 1999, may serve as a useful model. It announces:

The disparity between the number of whites and the number of blacks and Hispanics using the Internet is growing toward a "racial ravine," a new government report said yesterday . . .

The article then goes on to include the title of the report and the specific agency that issued it. The 239-word article also notes that it is the "third such survey by the government since 1995."

Thank you, AP writer Ted Bridis, for making it so much easier to locate this document.

If journalism is the first draft of history, reporters can assist the revisers by dutifully noting their sources. May I offer the following simple suggestions:

■ With apologies to the real estate business, keep in mind what really counts: citation, citation, citation. If

you know the name of the report or the agency that issued it, make sure to include that information. It takes only a few extra words, but these often make an enormous difference in tracking down the document.

■ When editing an article, cut descriptions of the document's content before deleting citation information.

■ Since many documents are now posted on the Internet, please include the URL.

■ If you are covering a congressional hearing, make sure to note whether it was held in the Senate or House, the specific committee, and, if possible, the legislators conducting the hearing. For pending legislation, include the names of the major sponsors and the title of the bill.

■ If you are reporting on a medical or scientific study, mention the exact title of the journal and the specific date of the issue. "A study in a medical journal recently reported" will hardly help the reader wanting to find the actual article.

■ Since television and radio reporters use even fewer words than print journalists, it is particularly important for these non-print reporters to state the source of the document. Many national newscasts regularly feature major new scientific and medical studies yet neglect to provide the interested viewer with the opportunity to find quickly the actual report. This information also could easily be cited on the network's Web site.

Your reports do pique the interest of your audience; these readers, viewers, and listeners, as well as fellow journalists, really do want to know more. By helping your friendly librarian find the full texts of the documents you report on, you will better serve us all. ■



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# BOOKS

## The Sound of History

BY GLORIA COOPER

When last we eavesdropped on the White House conversations secretly recorded by Lyndon Johnson, it was August 1964, and the accidental president was about to accept the nomination that would keep him in the Oval Office in his own unequivocal right. But even in those nine preceding post-assassination months, the major themes that, in all their variations, would define the Johnson presidency — Vietnam, civil rights, the obsession with Bobby — were already clear, his relations with the press already a familiar leitmotif. ("Hey, Hey, LBJ: How Many Journalists Did You Tape Today?" *CJR*, May/June 1998.)

Now, in the second volume of the historian Michael Beschloss's beautifully edited and annotated transcripts of the mesmerizing tapes, that leitmotif resounds again as the president picks up the tempo in his race against Barry Goldwater. To the receptive columnist William S. White, Johnson proposes a piece that would "take the high line" while raising the specter of a return to McCarthyism. "Oh, I'd just be shocked. I would say that . . . you hope Goldwater doesn't stoop to . . . guilt by association. We cannot have character assassination. We had that in the McCarthy days," Johnson offers helpfully. To the muckraking Drew Pearson, he promises leaks for an exposé about a payoff made by Goldwater running-mate William Miller, then plants more: "Now I'll give you one thing . . . Some of these [riots] in some of these Northern cities — the evidence looks pretty close to Mr. Lamar Hunt of Dallas, Texas . . . Some of the folding money — to finance that . . . You better just . . . say, 'I want to send a warning to some of these oil millionaires that are

putting their dough in some of this rioting . . . They're going to get themselves into deep trouble and they're going to hurt their country. Are you listening, Mr.

### REACHING FOR GLORY: LYNDON JOHNSON'S SECRET WHITE HOUSE TAPES, 1964-1965

EDITED AND WITH COMMENTARY  
BY MICHAEL BESCHLOSS  
SIMON & SCHUSTER. 475 PP. \$30

Lamar Hunt?" To C. Richard West, the conservative editorial page editor of *The Dallas Morning News*, he indicates that his Republican opponent is unstable. "Goldwater is a nervous man. An impulsive man. A childish man . . . You want the real questions answered, don't you? Goldwater has had two serious nervous breakdowns. Had to be taken off, taken out of the country . . ."

And so it goes, standard moves by the Great Orchestrator. Then, in mid-October, only a few weeks before Election Day, Abe Fortas and Clark Clifford, Johnson's personal lawyers, phone with a bombshell that could, as Johnson himself puts it, "destroy the Presidency": after leaving Katharine Graham's party celebrating the opening of *Newsweek's* new offices, Walter Jenkins, the president's closest aide, keeper of damaging files and stasher-away of funny money, has been

arrested for performing oral sex on a pickup in the men's room of the local YMCA. What will the Washington press do? Fortas and Clifford report that together they've paid visits to the *Evening Star* and the *Daily News*, and have come away confident that the story will be killed; their visit with Russ Wiggins, editor of the *Post*, has given them similar hope, as has their talk with Walter Trohan, Washington bureau chief of the *Chicago Tribune*, who has told them "he's not going to write it, and he won't let anybody on his staff write it . . . He said that he can't bring himself to write a story like this about a man who has got six children." All these upbeat expectations come to a crashing halt when UPI puts the Jenkins story on the wires, complete with the facts of an earlier episode in 1959. Damage control becomes the order of the day. Jenkins, now hospitalized, has got to resign; his wife has got to stop

giving out interviews; Lady Bird has got to keep her distance from the Jenkinses, and her compassionate notion to give their old friend "the number-two job at KTBC" — the family station in Austin at which Jenkins used to work — has got to be, regrettably, rejected.

LIBRARY PHOTO/KECIL STOUGHTON



ed ("I don't think that you'd have a license five minutes with a station being operated by someone like that," LBJ, equally sad about Jenkins's plight but ever so much more practical, explains). In short, whatever it takes has got to be done to keep the press from accomplishing what Johnson perceives as its mission, the thing he fears most — that it will make him, in the words of his oft-repeated refrain, "into a Warren Harding."

Luckily, as a campaign issue, White House morality falls flat. The sweetness of Johnson's landslide victory, however, is spoiled by the sour note struck by some in the press who interpret the sweep as a choice between the lesser of two evils. Hurt and embittered, LBJ taps Edwin Weisl, Sr., a longtime confidante in New York, to marshal his powerful media contacts for some counter moves that will "create an image" of affectionate public support. "Here's Newhouse and here's Dick Berlin [of Hearst] and here's Roy Howard [of Scripps-Howard] and here's *The Washington Post* and *Star* — they're our friends," Johnson declares. "We've got all these folks. 'Now damn it, let's give this guy a chance. Let's give him a chance to try to hold the country together' . . . Call up the head of that agency and tell him . . . you want him to plan a campaign . . . Then you talk to Berlin and say, 'Now God damn it, these little old half-assed editorials that you-all wrote saying "We are for Johnson," but then treating them all equally . . . It looked like to me Goldwater got better news than we did.' Weisl agrees. "I'll get busy," he assures LBJ. "I'm meeting Mr. Newhouse for dinner tonight." The president continues, "You just tell Newhouse . . . that I want you-all to say that this man is *loved*, that this man has the affection of the *country*, that this man won the hearts of the *people*, that there's nothing like it ever *happened*, and let's give him a *chance*, and let's *help* him. And tell him, by God, I'll stand by his side in all of his ventures and *help him*." "I will do everything I can," Weisl promises.

It doesn't work; like the situation in Vietnam, Johnson's treatment by the press goes from bad to worse. Still, the degree to which that treatment occupies White House attention may strike some readers as extreme. As the political players — Eisenhower and Truman, Daley and Dirksen, Mansfield and McLellan and Fulbright and Ford, Connally, the

## Listening in on the president and the press

Kennedys, Wallace and King — come and go, talking of Medicare, education, voting rights, and poverty; as the White House inner circle — Rusk and McNamara and Bundy, Katzenbach and Vance, Reedy and Moyers and Hoover — wrestles with one crisis after another; as Lady Bird confides, in her own recorded diaries, her helpless sympathy for the president's agony and pain, the matter of the media — from Goldenson and Stanton and Kintner to, in LBJ's envious words, "the Lippmanns and the Restons and the Alsops and the Rowland Evanses . . . the Joe Krafts, and the rest" of the Bobby crowd that gave JFK such an easy time, appearing in various forms, individually and collectively, directly and indirectly — is never far away.

Curiously, that matter of the media has been pretty far away when it comes to the scores of reviews, articles, interviews, and editorials that have appeared around the country about the Beschloss book; most focus, understandably, on the look it affords into the hearts and minds of those conducting the war in Vietnam. Only rarely, for example, does a review touch upon the conversation between Louisiana's Senator Russell Long, literally begging that the Shreveport post office not be closed, and LBJ, refusing to help until they "get those damn Birchites out of that newspaper [the ultraconservative *Shreveport Times*] that called me a dirty, low-down, thieving, son of a bitch every day" for signing the civil rights bill. Though Long pleads that "we've got some good people who own that *Times-Picayune* who are hoping to buy that paper," Johnson will not be moved. "It hurts me not to do anything you want to do," he tells Long. "But God Almighty, don't you pick out the cross-eyed, stuttering, bowlegged girl and bring her up and say, 'Now, listen, this ought to be the beauty queen, and you name her, by God, and it's a favor to me!'"

Ignored altogether is LBJ's reaction to network coverage by, for instance, NBC,

notably Robert Goralski's report that the new bombings of North Vietnam are aimed at forcing the North Vietnamese to negotiate. "Goralski is a very naive reporter and runs awful hard for a headline," Bundy observes to LBJ . . . "But he's got it all turned around." "Why don't you talk to Bob Kintner [president of NBC News]" Johnson suggests. "I think I would say this — that we don't want to complain, and this is entirely a matter for them, but . . . that we're trying our best to go far enough [in Vietnam] without going too far. Ron Nelson [NBC reporter Nessen, later press secretary to Gerald Ford] spent all of his time talking about the big black Cadillacs coming up here and the 'great day of crisis' — when there hadn't been a meeting all day . . . Goralski was following the same practice last night. Special report, flashes. 'It has been heard that somebody might feel' that may belong to the Cabinet that this could happen . . . If NBC wants to become that irresponsible, why they can, but he ought to know it . . . Tell him these . . . children need a little supervision. The Chancellors don't do anything like that, and this boy that used to be here at the White House . . . Sandy Vanocur and this Ray Scherer — they're all good. Particularly Chancellor . . . [He] doesn't like to pick up this stuff. He's kind of reserved and he sits back and reads Pla-to."

Nor do any of the several reviews and articles in *The New York Times*, the paper that Johnson repeatedly complained "gives me hell all the time," offer even a hint of that close-to-home fact (talk about a credibility gap!) let alone the raw revelation that one of the motives behind the president's selection of Arthur Goldberg as a Supreme Court justice was that "this Jew thing" would gain him favor with the *Times*.

Perhaps the writers regarded these insights into the president-press relationship as inside baseball, of little interest to general readers. Perhaps they dismissed those insights, and that relationship, as a bit too peculiar to the Johnson years to hold any resonance for either the journalism or politics practiced since. Whatever the reason, to pass them by was a shame. The historic music of that antiphonal chorus needs to be heard, and remembered. ■

Gloria Cooper is CJR's deputy executive editor.

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# Handling Hot Potatoes

BY BRUCE PORTER

They don't tell you this in journalism school, but sometimes the hardest part of investigative reporting isn't tracking down the story, it's getting your editors to run what you've found out. Ask Robert Port, formerly the special assignment editor of the AP, who had the budget and the freedom to send bird-dog reporters chasing leads all over the world.

Acting on information from a stringer in Korea, Port sent a researcher to the National Archives back in 1998 to look for

**INTO THE BUZZSAW: LEADING JOURNALISTS EXPOSE THE MYTH OF A FREE PRESS**

EDITED BY KRISTINA BORJESSON  
PROMETHEUS BOOKS. 275 PP. \$26

evidence of whether U.S. soldiers were involved in the massacre of 400 civilians seeking shelter under a bridge at the start of the Korean War. Two days later his man came up with a radio message to the 1st Cavalry Division sent by one of its commanders. It said: "No refugees to cross the front lines. Fire everyone trying to cross lines. Use discretion in case of women and children."

"In the life of an investigative reporter," writes Port, "there come certain awful, lonely moments of realization . . . when you stumble upon something you know in your gut . . . is not just news, but terribly important news."

The resulting story, about the massacre at No Gun Ri, dominated headlines for weeks, and in 2000 it won for the AP a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting. Nowhere in the citation, however, was mention made of Port. Nor, in the accompanying press release, was there any indication that, according to Port, the AP had held the piece for over a year while he wrangled with his superiors to get them to release the story. Or that ultimately Port had become such a pest, the way he tells it, that before the story ran the AP president, Lou Baccardi, relegated him to a side-line job in the newsroom and abolished his investigative unit altogether. Terminally embittered, Port quit the wire service. Today he is a reporter for the New York *Daily News*.

"I had been forced to accept a sad reality of the American news business," he

writes. "Some of our biggest, most trusted news organizations simply lack the courage, the will, or the leadership to consistently do the work necessary to expose the truth about the most controversial subjects in our world . . ." (The AP's Baccardi disputes Port's vision. "The AP's conscience is clear," Baccardi told *CJR* in November 2000.)

Port's struggle to get out the story is one of the more compelling tales from *Into the Buzzsaw*, a compilation of eighteen cases assembled by Kristina Borjesson, a free-lance TV producer, wherein reporters complain about how their efforts were cast aside by supervisors too blind, too venal, or too cowardly to print the truth.

Each story is a decidedly one-sided account, with no notice given to the possibility that, as with the AP, the bosses might well have a different tale to tell. In subject matter, they range from the author Gerald Colby's lament that monetary advances for his investigation of U.S. financial interests in Latin America began to shrink the closer he got to looking at the Rockefeller family, to the TV producer Monika Jensen-Stevenson's complaint that CBS's *60 Minutes* refused to adequately support her investigation into the charge that the Pentagon had grossly understated the figures involving MIAs from the Vietnam War.

Some of these apparent management failures had to do with a seemingly debilitating lack of nerve. In the AP case, while Port's staff was gathering background on the massacre story, CNN's Peter Arnett had come out with the now infamous "Tailwind" story, which alleged that during the Vietnam War a Special Forces unit had used Sarin nerve gas in an operation to rescue POWs held in Laos. The accusation ultimately collapsed for lack of hard evidence and, Port believes, caused jittery editors at the AP to fear their Korean exposé might share a similar fate.

Other news organizations stand accused of chickening out in the face of expensive lawsuits. In 1997, for example, Fox News refused to run a report compiled by Jane Akre, an investigative reporter and anchor of WTVT-TV, its outlet in Tampa, Florida, which in essence charged that a hormone manufactured by Monsanto Chemical that increased milk production in dairy cows had been hastily approved by the FDA without its hav-



ing fully examined reports that the drug could also stimulate the growth of cancer cells in humans who drank the milk. After Monsanto threatened libel action, Fox turned the story over to its lawyer, Carolyn Forrest, who had it revised according to her own journalistic lights. "Virtually everything Monsanto said was allowed to stand without refutation, even when we knew and documented certain claims to be flatly false," writes Akre, whose perseverance got her fired from the station.

Although her original version never got on the air, Akre ultimately prevailed. In an unusual lawsuit, the first of its kind filed by a journalist under Florida's "Whistleblower" act, she contended that Fox had retaliated against her for refusing to participate in "illegal" activity. The illegality here consisted of Fox's forcing her to sign off on a documentary that flouted FCC rules requiring TV journalists to report stories honestly and work in the public interest. In its effort to "take no risks," she writes, "Fox threatened us with our jobs every time we resisted the dozens of mandated changes that would sanitize the story, and fill it with lies and distortions." The jury agreed, and awarded her \$425,000 in damages.

In all they endured for the sake of principle, Akre and Port certainly deserve comfortable seats in journalistic heaven. Many of the other complainants in *Buzzsaw*, however, don't seem quite so convincing; and some of them come off as annoyingly self-righteous. Greg Palast, for one, says he abandoned working as a reporter in the United States in favor of the British press after he couldn't get anyone to publish his "groundbreaking exposés known for stripping bare abuses." As a free-lancer, he says, he was ignored by mainstream news organizations when he offered to sell them a story saying the Florida secretary of state had succeeded in knocking black voters off the rolls just before the 2000 presidential election. He did, however, market his scoop to the Web magazine *Salon*, at which point the story was picked up by the major media. So what's his beef? one might ask. That big-time editors ignored entreaties by a free-lancer, then changed their minds when he got their attention? As evidence of what the book's press release says is the "awesome depth and breadth of censorship in America today," Palast's experience doesn't seem quite to hack it.

Other examples in her book, particularly those involving the CIA, are so dense and filled with innuendos and unanswered questions as to be believable

only with a great degree of prior willingness. We get another run-through by Gary Webb of his spurned allegation that the CIA was responsible for urban drug addiction by helping the Contras sell major amounts of cocaine to the Crips and the Bloods of Los Angeles. As everyone now knows, Webb's newspaper, the *San Jose Mercury News*, apologized to readers for running the piece without better substantiation and demoted Webb to the suburban Cupertino office. Webb likens his experience to what was going on in 1938 when fascist governments intimidated the press into ignoring the truth. "Unfortunately, we have reached that point," he writes, a judgment that adds to his list of shortcomings a penchant for overstatement. And as far as the CIA charges go, there've been no major developments in the case since to prove his paper did him any wrong.

Then there are the journalists consumed with the TWA Flight 800 case, Bjorjesson among them, who take up about a quarter of the book explicating their theory that the plane was brought down with a missile fired by mistake from one of several warships they say were closer to the crash site than the Pentagon is willing to admit. Again, to the casual reader there's no way to tell truth from wishful reporting here, forget imagining what a tremendous task it would require to prevent every sailor on an Aegis missile cruiser, as well as their friends and spouses and the B-girls they'll be comporting with in the next port of call, from whispering a word that they'd been involved in the biggest Oops event of the twentieth century.

And in the end, where exactly is the censorship? Everyone knows all about the friendly fire theory, those eyewitnesses who think they saw something streak into the plane. One story after another emerged from the firmament, was responded to, had its shelf life in the public consciousness, then got slotted back to the level of believability people felt it deserved.

The press does a lousy, incomplete job of covering a lot of important things that people should know a lot more about than they do. Corporate control over government agencies comes immediately to mind. But, with the exception of the Monsanto case, that category of stories didn't make it into *Buzzsaw*, one of the failings that renders the book more than just a little beside the point. ■

*Bruce Porter teaches at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism, where he is special assistant to the dean.*

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# The Goldberg Disputations

BY TOM GOLDSTEIN

The touchy topic of media bias was first quantified in 1937 by Leo Rosten, who examined the character and background of the Washington press corps in *The Washington Correspondents*. Rosten, better remembered for his later book, *The Joys of Yiddish*, found that journalists were liberal, and just about every study since then has confirmed his findings.

But no study, not even the oft-cited *Media Elite*, the 1986 book by S. Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman, and Linda S. Lichter, has shown that the personal backgrounds and values of journalists are particularly relevant to how journalists report the news.

*Bias*, a surprise best seller by Bernard Goldberg, a onetime CBS correspondent, buys into the iffy research promulgated by the Lichters and Rothman.

**BIAS: A CBS INSIDER EXPOSES HOW THE MEDIA DISTORT THE NEWS**  
BERNARD GOLDBERG  
REGNERY PUBLISHING, INC.  
232 PP. \$27.95

His chatty, highly anecdotal book picks up where he left off in 1996 when he breached professional etiquette and attacked another CBS correspondent in an op-ed column for *The Wall Street Journal*.

In that op-ed column, he criticized a *CBS Evening News* feature by colleague Eric Engberg, on the presidential candidate Steve Forbes's flat tax, as setting "new standards for bias." Reading the transcript of that segment, called "Reality Check," six years later suggests that it is a tongue-in-cheek skewering of a candidate who ran his campaign by purchasing advertising to get his points across. The segment in question begins with a sound bite from Forbes, displaying no small measure of hyperbole in promulgating the flat tax: "We would see a Renaissance the likes of which has never been seen before." With similar hyperbole, Engberg goes about trying to puncture that statement.

That deeply offended Goldberg, who, with his own hyperbole, noted in his op-ed that "the old argument that the networks and other 'media elites' have a lib-



eral bias is so blatantly true that it's hardly worth discussing any-more." (Goldberg's thesis resonates deeply and lastingly with the editorial page of the *Journal*. In fact, in the lead editorial of its first paper of this year, the *Journal*, in an editorial "Bernie Non Grata," praised the author.)

In his book, he elaborates on his op-ed point, offering rhetorical assertions like these:

"I said out loud what millions of TV news viewers all over America know and have been complaining about for years: that too often, Dan and Peter and Tom and a lot of their foot soldiers don't deliver the news straight, that they have a liberal bias, and that no matter how often the network stars deny it, it is true."

When Goldberg is less polemical and gets down to specifics — such as the media's tendency to identify conservatives as conservatives but not liberals as liberals — some of his charges have the ring of truth.

In one chapter, he argues that television misled its audience about homelessness — how "homelessness ended the day Bill Clinton was sworn in as president" — a big coincidence "since it pretty much began the day Ronald Reagan was sworn in as president." In another chapter he accuses reporters of spreading the "myth of heterosexual AIDS" in reports that emphasized the politically correct message that everybody — not just gays and drug addicts — can get AIDS, one more example, as Goldberg sees it, of journalists "letting their compassion get in the way of their reporting." In still another chapter, he ridicules the dismay at CBS when the field producer of a report on Alabama prisons turned in a videotape of a twen-

ty-man chain gang, nineteen of whom were black. The "idiotic" order from the liberal senior producer, as Goldberg retells it: Get more pictures of white criminals next time.

Goldberg is on less sure footing when he goes ad hominem. He is particularly rough on his one-time friend and boss, CBS anchor Dan Rather — whom, when he is not calling him just plain "Dan," he irritatingly labels "The Dan." Rather, of course — portrayed here as ruthless, self-centered, and unforgiving — has been a favorite target of the right for nearly two decades, so much so that a few years after he became anchor, rumblings began that Jesse Helms was going to engineer a takeover of CBS merely to become his boss and get rid of him.

Of Rather's boss, Andrew Heyward, the president of CBS News, Goldberg writes that in a face-to-face conversation, Heyward told him "of course there's a liberal bias in the news. All the networks tilt left." Goldberg's rank hearsay continues: He writes that while publicly chastising Goldberg for "a real breach of our fundamental trust," Heyward admitted to him privately that the Engberg piece had represented "a conspiracy of fuck-ups." With the odd logic, if not clairvoyance, characteristic of many arguments made in the book, Goldberg concludes that what Heyward "didn't say, not explicitly anyway, was that they let it on the air *precisely* because they didn't see anything wrong with it."

An even bigger problem is that nowhere does Goldberg show any causal link between reporters' political prejudices and their coverage. Indeed, he ignores studies showing that while journalists are centrists, or left-leaning on social issues, they are right-leaning on economic ones. Nowhere does Goldberg try to reconcile his thesis with the opposing belief that mass media content reflects the ideology of those who finance the media, who are generally more conservative than their employees.

These deficiencies do not seem to have discouraged book buyers. For a while, *Bias* was perched on top of *The New York Times* bestseller list ("perhaps the most astonishing publishing event in the last twelve months," wrote Martin Arnold, publishing columnist of the paper, in January), far outselling a slew of recently published, more rigorous books examining contemporary journalism. ■

Tom Goldstein is dean of Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism.

# BOOK REPORTS

BY JAMES BOYLAN

## **ETERNALLY VIGILANT: FREE SPEECH IN THE MODERN ERA**

Edited by Lee C. Bollinger and  
Geoffrey R. Stone  
The University of Chicago Press  
330 pp. \$35

Stone, provost at the University of Chicago, and Bollinger, the incoming president of Columbia University, offer here an intelligent and not unhelpful review of the status of free-speech doctrine, primarily as shaped by court decisions between 1919 — the title is taken from Oliver Wendell Holmes's dissent in *Abrams v. United States* — and 1969. Among the particularly illuminating contributions are "dialogues" at the beginning and end between Stone and Bollinger; a challenging essay by Lillian R. BeVier of Virginia raising and resolving the question of why the press, almost alone among consumer products, is excused from liability; and an engaging disquisition by Vincent Blasi of Columbia that avoids rehashing old decisions in favor of drawing on Milton and Brandeis to find the true spirit of free speech in "good character" — that is, in a strong and resilient society. He offers a list of character traits for preserving free speech that might also well serve journalists: "inquisitiveness, independence of judgment, distrust of authority, willingness to take initiative, perseverance, courage to confront evil, aversion to simplistic accounts and solutions, capacity to act on one's convictions even in the face of doubt and criticism, self-awareness, imagination, intellectual and cultural empathy, resilience, temperamental receptivity to change, tendency to view problems and events in a broad perspective, and respect for evidence."

## **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL GUIDE TO BUSINESS STYLE AND USAGE**

Compiled and edited by Paul R. Martin  
Wall Street Journal Books, 261 pp. \$30

Although its title might suggest that this is a manual on how to write business letters, this is the public introduction of *The Wall Street*

*Journal's* general stylebook, the counterpart of the guides published by The Associated Press and *The New York Times*. Martin, the *Journal's* assistant managing editor, has been in charge of the newspaper's usages since 1972, and has previously compiled internal versions of the stylebook. His work is marked by concision and clarity; he scorns the kind of elegant essay strewn through the *Times's Manual of Style and Usage* (1999). The special emphases of the *Journal* can be seen in extended no-nonsense entries on, among others: bankruptcy (no doubt much-thumbed these days); listings for the international economic groups G3, G7, G8, G10, G15, G22, and G24; loan terminology; and profit terminology ("loss" gets only three lines). The longest, curiously, is devoted to military titles.

## **RALPH EMERSON MCGILL: VOICE OF THE SOUTHERN CONSCIENCE**

By Leonard Ray Teel  
The University of Tennessee Press  
559 pp. \$50; \$24.95 paper

Ralph McGill (1898-1969) was the most celebrated of the band of southern journalists who sought to ease their region out of the old era of racial segregation and disfranchisement. He wrote, almost daily, and as he pleased, for forty years in *The Atlanta Constitution*. In the North, he came to be regarded as a hero; southerners had mixed feelings (some called him "Red Ralph" or "Rastus") but they paid attention. Leonard Ray Teel, a professor at Georgia State, makes clear that McGill was a man of complexity and contradictions, and fully deserving of the full biography Teel has written. Born in Tennessee, McGill quit Vanderbilt University to become a sports writer, a trade he left for political writing not long after he moved to Atlanta in 1929. Touring Europe on a fellowship in the 1930s, he met Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish sociologist, who was just starting the project that became the classic analysis of race, *An American Dilemma* (1944). Race and racial justice were high on McGill's agenda thereafter. He was far from

saintly. For years he drank to excess; his behavior on a round-the-world tour of American journalists in 1945 almost got him sent home. He longed for honors, and feared that he would never win a Pulitzer Prize; in the end he won not only a Pulitzer but almost every other honor Columbia University had to offer. Although the FBI was considered hostile to the civil-rights movement, he maintained a friendly, confidential relationship with J. Edgar Hoover. Although he spoke for the poor of both races, he was also a booster of "New South" corporatism and a friend of Atlanta's corporate elite. Teel lays all this out unblinkingly; he has more than done his homework. If fault is to be found, it is that he is so intent on enriching the background that he often drifts out of focus and into trivia. Even so, he has produced a monumental life of a monumental figure in twentieth-century journalism.

## **UP FROM INVISIBILITY: LESBIANS, GAY MEN, AND THE MEDIA IN AMERICA**

By Larry Gross  
Columbia University Press  
295 pp. \$49.50; \$18.50 paper

Gross, a professor at the Annenberg School for Communication at Pennsylvania, provides a readable account of the gradual emergence of a gay-lesbian presence in news, entertainment, and advertising over the last fifty years. Although much of the book is centered on prime-time television, it also recounts the metamorphosis of *The New York Times* — from portraying the gay presence in New York primarily as a social threat, through outraged managerial embarrassment over a 1975 article on a gay cruise that slipped into the travel section, through resistance by A.M. Rosenthal, executive editor, to using the term "gay," to the paper's present state of receptivity in news and editorial columns that Gross finds ideal, if a little astonishing.

James Boylan is the founding editor of *CJR* and professor emeritus of journalism and history at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.



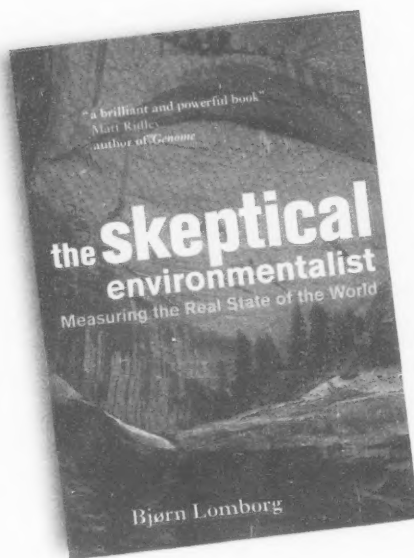
# The Lomborg File: When the Press Is Lured By a Contrarian's Tale

BY RUSS BAKER

When the English-language version of *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, Bjorn Lomborg's rosy prognosis on the state of the earth's ecosystems, was published last September, the media sounded hosannas. *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, and other publications gave the thumbs-up to the Danish professor, who dismisses many environmental concerns as "phantom problems" created and perpetuated by a self-serving environmental movement. *The Washington Post's* reviewer concluded that it was "a magnificent achievement," and "the most significant work on the environment since the appearance of its polar opposite, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, in 1962."

Corporate-backed entities, delighted with the affirmation that industrial policies were not as harmful to life on the planet as commonly believed, lauded the book. One group, the "Cooler Heads Coalition" — formed by the Competitive Enterprise Institute and others to "dispel the myths of global warming" — arranged for the author to participate in a Capitol Hill briefing on the topic.

Soon, though, scathing critiques began to flower in the academic, scientific, and environmental communities of Europe, and not long after in the U.S. Indeed, when the book made it to these shores last year, American media seemed unaware of a debate that had been raging inside Denmark since 1998, when a Danish version was released. At the time, Lomborg, an associate professor who



teaches statistics at the Political Science Department at Aarhus University, also published a series of four articles in the Danish newspaper *Politiken*. Scientists, researchers, NGO officials — and a vocal group of Lomborg's own university colleagues — quickly challenged Lomborg's interpretations of statistics and other data in the Danish media.

When the liberal *Guardian* newspaper published Lomborg's theories, Oxford-based environmentalists put up a Web site (anti-Lomborg.com) to challenge them. The environmental writer Mark Lynas noted on the site, for example, that Lomborg's cost-benefit analysis, which Lomborg used to argue that society cannot afford to cut fossil fuel

emissions, ignored the economic potential of conversion to cleaner energy sources. (Lynas, it should be added, threw a pie in Lomborg's face last September 5 at a Borders bookstore in Oxford.) Craig Simmons, co-author of *Sharing Nature's Interest*, takes Lomborg to task on the Oxford site for claiming that 100 years of U.K. waste could be disposed of in a heap "only" sixty-four square miles at its base and 100 feet high. Simmons says Lomborg fails to consider anything besides municipal waste, which makes up just one-fifth of the total refuse generated; Simmons also shows how Lomborg underestimated the waste stream growth rate, because he extrapolates data from the U.S., which, unlike Britain, uses recycling and incineration extensively

to avoid landfills.

Most egregiously, say his detractors, Lomborg neglected to consider cause-and-effect. To show that environmentalists are alarmists, Lomborg pointed to recent improvements in certain benchmark statistics, including depletion rates for species, the ozone layer, and a number of closely watched natural resources such as forests and freshwater supplies. But in doing so, Lomborg ignored the possibility that environment-friendly corrective measures may have been responsible for the improvements he cites. In other words, the very vigilance that Lomborg decries as alarmist may already be helping avert environmental disaster.



Lomborg got a rough ride in the U.S. too. "His facts are usually fallacies and his analysis is largely non-existent," Stuart Pimm, a professor of conservation biology at Columbia University, told *The Economist*. *Scientific American* ran an eleven-page critique of *The Skeptical Environmentalist* in its January issue.

In response to what it called Lomborg's "pseudo-scholarship," the Washington, D.C.-based World Resources Institute, an environmental research and advocacy group, urged journalists to exercise caution in reporting on or reviewing the book. "Lomborg paints a caricature of the environmental agenda based on sometimes mistaken views widely held thirty years ago, but to which no serious environmental institution today subscribes," the group said in a media alert. "He exaggerates, makes sweeping generalizations, presents false choices, is highly selective in his use of data and quotations and, frequently, is simply wrong."

**T**he success of *The Skeptical Environmentalist* — Cambridge University Press says the paperback version had been reprinted seven times by February — in a market primed by favorable reviews and articles, suggests that journalists may be too easily spun by weighty-looking tomes, and too easily enamored of contrarian insights. The news business loves personality pieces about the new star who has emerged to shake up this or that piece of "conventional wisdom." The *New York Times* science writer Nicholas Wade liked the fact that Lomborg was not a hard-line anti-environmentalist, but an erstwhile ecologist who had come to see the error of his former ways. "Strange to say, the author of this happy thesis is not a steely-eyed economist at a conservative Washington think tank but a vegetarian, backpack-toting academic who was a member of

Greenpeace for four years," Wade wrote in the paper's Science Times section in an article/profile that preceded the book's release. In a brief phone conversation with CJR, Wade said that he would let his largely favorable article speak for itself. But he also indicated that he is preparing a new piece about the controversy that broke out around Lomborg after he wrote his largely sympathetic article last August.

None of this is to say that all of Lomborg's champions have abandoned him. *The Economist*, for instance, published two pieces in February that examined the controversy and, while conceding some flaws, stuck by its earlier glowing assessment of Lomborg. (Lomborg defends himself on a Web site, [www.lomborg.org](http://www.lomborg.org).)

Certainly, one of the more curious aspects of the Lomborg bubble was the enthusiasm for the word of a man from a small European country, untrained in the life and physical sciences, on the future of the world. This seemed to confirm the adage that "an expert is anyone from more than twenty miles away." Indeed, to review this book by a Danish professor *The Washington Post* chose a philosophy professor from New Zealand. Not surprisingly, the people least impressed with the coverage of Lomborg in the American popular press were the Danish journalists who had been following the story for several years. "While those newspapers wrote such positive things, the scientific journals said the opposite," marvels Hans Davidsen-Nielsen, a reporter at *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten*, Denmark's largest daily, who recently examined international coverage of Lomborg for his own paper — including highly critical articles in such publications as *Science*, *Nature*, and *Scientific American*.

This credulity gap largely stems from a growing impatience within the mainstream media with what some view as the perpetual pessimism of environmental scientists. In fact, environmental



**PIE EYED? Bjorn Lomborg under fire**

coverage has been dwindling steadily the last few years, including at *The New York Times*, the arbiter of so many standards. The trend is not surprising: the business tends to tire of the same old problems that won't go away. As we've all heard editors say, "That's not news." Meanwhile, by definition, anything contrarian or unexpected is news.

It's no surprise that books offered as scientific treatises for the general public get a free ride. They carry the clout of science without having to go through the tough scrutiny of peer review. Book review sections tend to be less bound by the strictures of the newsroom. Reviewers are often chosen because of their intimacy with a topic, and typically have their own biases, known or unknown. Also, what impresses a book reviewer — skill in argumentation, stylish presentation, even poetic license — may mean little in the fact-checking business. Given these structural limitations of book reviews, news departments abdicate their responsibilities when they fail to scrutinize influential, even surging, theories, particularly works with loaded social agendas. As Winston Churchill said, "A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on." When contrarian books come out, newsrooms would do well to have somebody already suited up for quick sleuthing. ■

*Russ Baker is a contributing editor to CJR.*

**These books carry the clout of science without having to go through the tough scrutiny of peer review**

## ESSAY

# A Newspaper Day

BY MICHAEL SHAPIRO

On a winter's morning in 1978, when I was twenty-five and trying too hard to write like Jimmy Breslin, I came to work and was thrown into a story that would haunt me for years. I have since covered many sadder stories, and more horrific ones, too. But all those stories ended. This one never did, at least not for me, until now.

The story began on the morning of February 1, when a Syrian immigrant named Nabil Al-Sheikh Hassan drove to his in-laws' home in Bernardsville, New Jersey, and threatened to blow himself up if his estranged wife did not surrender to him their two young children. He had doused himself in gasoline. He had four Bic lighters and ten gallons of gasoline and lighter fluid.

I was working for the *Courier-News* in nearby Bridgewater. It was my first newspaper and I'd been there for two years. Suffice it to say that we covered the stuff local dailies are made of, and we had never had a day like the day when Nabil Hassan came for his children. Here, at last, was drama. The police descended, and with them came the fire department, ambulances, and a helicopter. Hassan allowed a princess phone to be delivered to the car. And as people began talking with him I was sent to find out who he was.

I drove all day, picking up a trail that took me through New Jersey and ended in a Pennsylvania bar where Hassan spent his out-of-work afternoons. Along the way I learned that he had come from Syria in the 1960s with little money but with considerable drive. He had since earned a B.A. and M.A., the latter in political philosophy from Drew University, in Madison, New Jersey. It was at Drew that he met a woman named Mary, whom he married. They had a son who was three, and a year-and-a-half-old daughter. The family

had spent a year in Syria and then returned to the United States.

And now Nabil Hassan wanted to take the children back to Syria. He talked with the police, and with old friends and mentors, for ten hours, all the while threatening his violent immolation. Only after his wife complied with his demand to take the children to Kennedy Airport did he finally relent and step out of the car.

He spent that night in a private psychiatric hospital. I spent it at the Homestead, a bar in New Brunswick, drinking vodka gimlets, thinking that I had at last lived the sort of newspaper day I'd always imagined.

The story might have concluded there for me, on that naïve and buoyant note, had I not been assigned to follow his case. Hassan, who had threatened harm only to himself, was not charged with a crime. Instead, he stayed on in the psychiatric hospital and, after his release, was somehow granted supervised visits with his children. His wife, meanwhile, was proceeding with a divorce. By summer the story was over. I was getting ready to leave for vacation when I got a call to say that Mary Hassan wanted to talk with me.

I found her in despair. The night before, Nabil Hassan had come to her apartment, struck her, and left with the children. He had fled the country. The children were with him in Syria. Even now, twenty-four years later, I can still see her sitting on her couch, swollen-eyed and helpless. I moved to a job near Chicago a month later and so was left with that enduring image: she had lost her children. I assumed she never saw them again.

Her story stayed with me not only for the desperation and sadness I had witnessed, but because it occurred in my first sublime newspaper moment. Only with time and with more stories would I come to recognize the discomfort most every journalist feels in associating so many of the best memories with the saddest times.

Years later I returned to the East Coast, still carrying that frozen image of Mary Hassan. I began to make the occasional inquiries. But I found nothing. Nabil Hassan had vanished. So had his children, and so had his wife. Still, I had saved the front page from the first day. And, not long ago, I set out to learn how the story had ended.

The police knew nothing, and neither did the prosecutors. Sources had moved away to points unknown, or had died. But then a lawyer for Mary Hassan's father told me he'd heard that things might have, in fact, worked out well for her. More than that he did not know. I went back to the clips, and happened upon the name of David Cowell, a professor of Nabil Hassan's at Drew, and a negotiator that day.

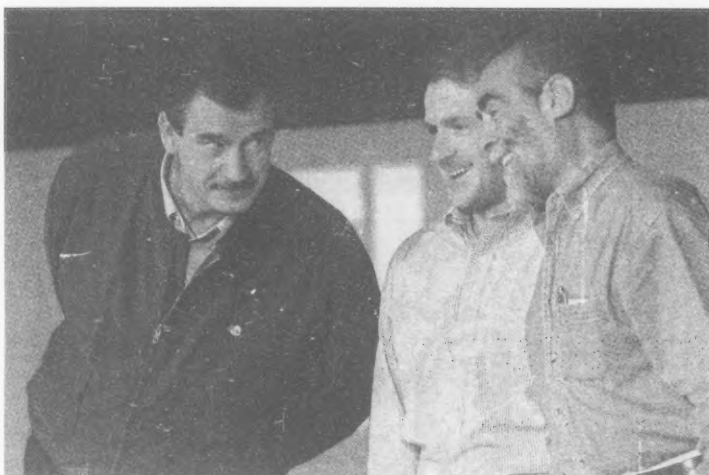
He knew. Nabil Hassan, he told me, was indeed in Damascus. The children were not. Several years after he took the children, Hassan returned with them to the United States. "He felt the children should see their mother," Cowell explained. Hassan had insisted on safe passage. But he was arrested almost immediately, and jailed. The children were returned to Mary Hassan. Nabil Hassan remained in the Morris County Jail for three months and was released only on the condition that he leave the United States and never return.

He calls David Cowell every few years, seeking a reference or advice. He has worked sporadically. He is fifty-six and lives in his parents' home.

Mary Hassan did not wish to speak about any of this, and, understandably, neither did anyone in her family. The children whom I believed she had lost are adults. I still wince at the memory of the young man at the Homestead bar, celebrating the day. ■

*Michael Shapiro teaches at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism.*

# The Lower case



## Drug Lords Hold Summit In Mexico

San Francisco Chronicle 4/15/01

## Coast Guard hearings conclude in boat sinking

Marin (Calif.) Independent Journal 11/30/01

## Eugene Nickerson dies; police torture trial judge

Waterbury (Conn.) Republican-American 01/03/02

## Oates has brain tumor; union files grievance

Detroit Free Press 10/09/01

## *Blame Flies After Collapse of Arena Bill*

The New York Times 9/08/01

## Washington D.C. top candidate for relocation

Waterbury (Conn.) Republican-American 1/18/02

## Police Stop Slaying Suspect Look-alikes

Yakima (Calif.) Herald-Republic 8/26/01

## Panda Lectures This Week at National Zoo

The Washington Post 1/13/01

## SMITH UNVEILS LEG TO REFORM BURIAL RULES AT ARLINGTON NAT. CEMETERY

The Lakehurst (N.J.) Advance News 12/12/01

## NRC: Fuel rods mistakenly stored in safe place

The Greenwich (Conn.) Time 1/16/02

## Bush vows to flesh out bin Laden

The Montgomery (Md.) Journal 12/30/01

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HEARST: WHERE JOURNALISM OF DISTINCTION IS AN EVERYDAY STORY



## The abuse of deaf students was unheard of until one newspaper wrote about it.



It was a subject that state officials didn't want to hear about or talk about: the history of sexual abuse at the Washington School for the Deaf. Seattle Post-Intelligencer reporter Ruth Teichroeb made sure the stories of the victims were heard for the first time. Her powerful series "Decades of Abuse" not only addressed a long-ignored problem in Washington state, but also looked at the national situation.

Bringing the facts to the public was not easy. The agencies in question fought to keep their records secret. In some cases, it took the newspaper's legal counsel to negotiate compliance of Freedom of Information requests. Throughout her six-month investigation, Teichroeb was persistent in her search for the truth. She uncovered that at least half of the nation's 50 taxpayer-funded deaf schools have had controversies about abuse against students. Yet, in almost every case, there were no actions taken to address the problems.

Since the series appeared, Washington lawmakers have pledged to look into the abuse pattern and Governor Gary Locke has appointed a panel to oversee reforms. Nationally, people in the deaf community have applauded Teichroeb's reports and experts are calling for a national monitoring system for deaf schools. Providing information that can lead to positive change is one more way Hearst Newspapers enrich readers' lives every day.

To read more on this story, go to <http://seattlepi.nwsources.com/specials/deafschool>





